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Love Lives of the Great

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF LADY HAMILTON

By ALBERT FLAMENT

Translated by

LOUIS ARTHUR CUNNINGHAM

NEW YORK · LONDON · MONTREAL

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TO

MADAME

THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH

IT IS BECAUSE, RADIANT, YOU LIVE AT BLENHEIM, WHERE THIS STORY ENDS, THAT I VENTURE TO OFFER YOU THE RECORD OF THESE DEPARTED LOVES. BUT ANOTHER REASON WILL ALREADY HAVE PLEADED MY JUSTIFICATION BEFORE ALL: LADY HAMILTON WAS LOVELY AMONG WOMEN

A. F.

"PRAY, WRITE TO ME
AND DON'T WRITE IN
THE STYLE OF A FRIEND
—WE ARE LOVERS"

*

*

Correspondence between Lady Hamilton
and Charles Greville

PROLOGUE

AFTER the death, at an early age, of her husband, a blacksmith of Nesse, young Mary Lyon, a buxom country-wench and tireless worker, came to live in Hawarden, her native borough in Flintshire. The land-owners, the Earl and Countess of Halifax, took her into their service, as cook. But the widow, who was only twenty-seven, brought with her the fruit of her short union with the smith, a little girl named Emma, aged two years and a half.

She entrusted to her parents, who were farmers, the child whose destiny was so soon to cast a spell of enchantment upon the people of her time and kindle on English soil a flame of scandal which flares up still at the mere breathing of her name: Lady Hamilton.

Whilst Mary Lyon worked at the castle, Emma played in the mud of the by-ways or at the homes of neighbors. Her grandparents were illiterate, like her mother, who had scratched her "mark" on the baptismal register, May 12th, 1765 . . . She gathered flowers in handfuls, seeking to grasp all that she could find . . . She was fed from a porringer

and dressed in clothes made from the remnants of skirts already patched. Lady Halifax defrayed the expenses of the school to which the child was sent. On Sunday, going to visit the castle, the girl draped herself gracefully in a cheap little shawl and when elegant ladies and tall gentlemen passed in a coach, she instinctively drew herself up, her neck held proudly like those of the women who looked out of the coach window. No teachers, no need of long practice. And from the instant of her appearance before the eyes of the world, the world was to succumb to her allure.

Into one of those middle-class provincial homes, in Hawarden, where hours are regular, where life flows on with the inevitable changes of the seasons, Emma first entered, at the age of twelve, as second maid to the Thomas family. There she grasped the idea of order, of the regular conduct of life, with careful thought for the morrow.

Mrs. Thomas taught her the value of morals and instilled a taste for house-keeping. The good woman sensed the dangers which would menace this too lovely child and congratulated herself that Emma was happily sheltered in the provinces. She spoke of Emma, in the evenings, with her husband, Mr. Honoratius Thomas, when the little girl had gone to bed.

They built a childish future for her in the image of their own Paradise. But Emma's mother, the sturdy Mary Lyon, flew in upon them one day like a gale of wind. She had decided to leave the kitchen of Lord and Lady Halifax and go to London. There she could make a living more easily than in Hawarden. She took her daughter away, causing great consternation among the Thomases. If her mother had not decided to quit the provinces, the life of Emma Lyon would perhaps have become a model of family life. Her famous intrigues, which wound up in London on the topmost rung of the social ladder, might have been but hidden love affairs, buried deep in the mystery of provincial existences. Had her destiny been in no way favored, the inspiration of painters, the mistress and wife of men of noble family, the ambassadress, the favorite of a queen and the idol of the most celebrated Englishman of his time, Nelson, Emma Lyon would have become only another Emma Bovary.

In London, Mary Lyon places her daughter, not yet fifteen, as chambermaid in the home of a composer named Linley, associated with the management of Drury Lane Theatre. The first plays which the wide-eyed little girl attend teach her the meaning of love.

She has reached that age when everything new is impressed directly on the mind. She begins to hear, mingled with the music played at the composer's, the mighty voice of London. And she stands, motionless, fixed, in a doorway or in the recess of a window, silent, with the bow of her mouth tensed and slightly lifted at the lip-corners, in a tiny pit of shadow.

Samuel, Mr. Linley's son, a young naval cadet, surprised her thus, during one of his holidays. They exchanged only a few words, but said more with glances. Samuel coughed; his health was delicate. One morning, he was unable to get up. His parents lived in the improvident way of artistic folk, with very irregular habits and a total ignorance of the little material comforts and of the care that should be given to the sick. Had he not been young, had he not been a sailor, Emma would probably not have watched with so much patience and self-denial by the bedside of Samuel Linley, who was soon nothing more than a dying man. In that house where echoed sounds of Drury Lane, where the father was ever at his music, Death came to dwell, to the accompaniment of the strains of comic-opera. Emma saw life ebb away a little more each day from that youthful body, in which alone lived two great eyes, open upon a fleet-

ing world which might have been so beautiful, since Emma lived.

When her loved patient had gone to his cold sleep under a stone in the nearby cemetery, her grief would not let Emma remain with the Linleys. Everything there recalled to her the dead young sailor, his blue eyes. . . . Before the closed door of the low-ceiled room, which she dared not enter, she had found, instinctively, her first tragic gesture. . . .

Life was hard for Emma. She went into the service of one Dr. Budd; then she found work in a fruit-store. Her beauty burgeoned. She was such a flower in the midst of the vegetables and fruits, that the customers wished to steal her from her employer. One of these, Mrs. Kelly, whose intimates had nicknamed her "The Abbess", hastened to take Emma away from her fruit-basket, and hired her as maid. Mrs. Kelly was a woman of doubtful morals. She entertained many kindly gentlemen and easy women; she bought the latest novels and never let a successful play go by without having judged it for herself. Emma listened to the juicy morsels of scandal recounted during the meals and absorbed such as seemed significant to a sixteen-year-old mind; as soon as Mrs. Kelly turned her back,

Emma would seize upon the novel that the guests had just praised.

Reading, the theatre, the overheard conversations, the casual caresses of the gentlemen guests, had begun to make another woman of her. One afternoon when "The Abbess" returned unexpectedly she found her room-door partly open. Emma, draped, was posing in theatrical attitudes, stretching out her arms towards the mirror. Perceiving Mrs. Kelly, she dropped the scarf borrowed from the wardrobe of her mistress and fled to her room.

That evening she was turned into the street.

She did not stay there long. She went to work as servant at a pot-house, popular with painters and actors. Her beauty held the regular customers and drew new ones. Emma rapidly acquired a kind of celebrity among these youths who dreamed of glory, these old men who had not known how to attain it. They came to study her face, to go forth then and dream of her a little and attempt to capture on canvas or in their writings some reflection of her guileless eyes in whose depths was mirrored the mystery of deep waters.

One afternoon, Mary Lyon, who worked as cook, we know not where, came to see her daughter when the day's work was done. She told Emma that one of her cousins had been

pressed the previous evening into the Royal Navy to the great sorrow of his mother.

What could Emma do to rescue this young man from the King's ships and return him to his family? The influence of an officer. . . .

That evening, Emma obtained from one of the frequenters of the pot-house a recommendation to Lieutenant John Willet Payne, whom she planned to see on the morrow.

Emma was still chaste. Her beauty, the finer fibre with which nature had endowed her, had kept her safe thus far from the designs of the servants with whom she worked side-by-side. What they would have dared with any other woman, they tried not on her. . . . The memory of young Linley had never been effaced—Linley, on whose cold forehead she had placed tenderly the first kiss of womanhood. Standing before Lieutenant John Payne, she was troubled by his likeness to Linley; nervously, her fingers toyed with the blue ribbon of her girdle. Payne captured the end of the ribbon, then her hands, his arms encircled her—his mouth touched her neck. He kissed her lips—the lips that had yielded their first kiss to the brow of one who was dead. Through the low windows of the office, far out, Emma saw now in the gathering dusk, over the officer's shoulder, the masts of many ships foresting the banks of the Thames, their

sails neatly furled, touched lingeringly by the sun's fading light.

At home on all the oceans of the world, these ships that she looked upon, ruled over that far-away Mediterranean, of which by the grace of her friend, Queen Maria Caroline of Naples, and by the power of Nelson, Lady Hamilton, having thrown off the chrysalis of Emma Lyon, would become—just as Cleopatra and Catherine Cornaro—queen and mistress in her turn.

I

AN enchanted hour followed that first yielding. The paper which freed the young cousin lay on the table. Emma folded it; then, looking on the hand that had signed, she seized it and crushed it to her lips. John raised her head so thickly crowned, and gazed deep into the ocean of her eyes, more disturbing than any he had sailed upon. His lips closed her soft eyelids . . . Emma did not return to the pot-house. That evening her admirers in vain awaited her there.

Payne told himself that this seductive and youthful bird, fallen thus unexpectedly into his hands, was not a little common sparrow, to be given its liberty in a few days. He felt a duty towards her. He was a sailor, therefore a mystic. He loved Emma not with a sensual love alone, for her warm flesh, her eyes, her burning lips, the virginity he had so quickly conquered. He read in her eyes the great pæan of Youth, which has just discovered an undreamed-of sweetness in the joy of living. The perfection of womanhood had been realized in an instant in this girl who had crossed his threshold still incomplete.

It was not enough for Payne to descend to her level; he wished to raise her to his own. Penniless, or nearly so, he obtained teachers for her. She scarcely knew how to write and so far had only spelled from the Bibles of her grandmother and Mrs. Thomas or secretly from the novels of "The Abbess". She took lessons in grammar and writing, while Payne was at his office. The taste for music she had acquired while in the service of the leader of Drury Lane, had not deserted her. She was very happy when she obtained a piano-teacher. . . . But the school-books never kept her long away from her mirror.

Soon she was with child. Was she rejoiced at the thought of motherhood? Her heart leaped at times; it was a generous heart. But pleasure was there, langourous, seductive, the call of an adventurous life, easier, more brilliant. Then, too, her future was marked out in advance.

Each of us can go only whither lies his destiny. And, yet, the charming Payne was passionately in love with Emma. He put his faith in her smile, in her youth, which was so far his alone; but for a time so short! The little money he possessed was squandered on ribbons of blue and scarfs rose-colored, for music-teachers, for a teacher of English for Emma! Little dinners for Emma, entertain-

ments for Emma. . . . Emma—two syllables which filled the heart of Payne with tumults of passion and covered the moving world of waters and sky with their immensity: Emma.

The child was born, a girl. They called her Emma. What other name was there in the world for a woman?

But a mother of scarcely seventeen could not know how to raise a child. And their rooms were too small. Emma, who quickly recovered, was again occupied with her singing, her harpsichord, grammar lessons, her "attitudes", pleasure—the pleasure of twining her arms around Payne's neck, which she liked to do, which she perhaps preferred to his thin-lipped and shaven mouth whose expression grew by degrees more doleful, and to which she was wont to press her lips voluptuously.

Emma had not discontinued seeing her mother, who loved her above all else and trusted blindly in her future. Like so many mothers of her kind, she foresaw that with Emma she would have an easy life, an assured peace, likewise a mite of consideration. . . .

Emma's daughter was sent to Hawarden, where the maternal grandmother, Mrs. Kidd, brought her up. Payne was sincere when he said he would look after the child's every need. Emma began to sing again, in a clear voice. The sailor was proud of his gentle, in-

telligent mistress, who did not, in the depths of her, perfect herself perhaps in just the way he thought she did,—but who flattered his man's vanity, which envisioned a great future for her.

The inevitable happened. The couple gave little parties, dinners, to young people, friends, who brought others with them. These amiable gentlemen formed Emma's court, but they could not fail to experience the charm of her presence without danger to her lover. One of them, Sir Harry Featherstonehaugh, was more taken with her than the others and let the fact be known. Payne had only his salary left; he was in debt. The lover who offered himself was not so young as the sailor; he had qualities antithetic to Payne's, and faults in like manner —faults which in Emma's eyes were virtues. Besides, he owned an estate, of which she had often heard his friends speak, where he hunted and bred horses. He was an excellent horseman. Emma was at that phase of life when a Manon Lescaut slumbers in the heart of every too lovely girl. . . .

Harry Fatherstonehaugh asked for a private interview with John Payne. The baronet knew the difficult situation of the couple. They could not remedy it. Sir Harry begged John to give Emma to him; he promised to hide her from every eye, not to reveal the place of their re-

treat. Confronted with the facts of his position, the impossibility of bettering it, Payne yielded, without a word, with only a piteous gesture.

After a last night spent with Emma, he returned to his duty. He knew he would find her no more on his return. Sir Harry would have taken her away. Like Des Grieux, he went that evening to an empty house. He returned to mourn near the things he loved, before he went to sea.

Emma Lyon, however, was with her new lover at Up Park, in a castle where she had arrived in great state; just as it happens in the story-books!

The countryside had greatly altered since the time when Emma left the house of Grandmother Kidd! A studied effect of distance beautified the trees in the foreground. Great avenues led off toward the distant heavens, between walls of verdant green. The peasants who tilled the soil were relegated, as was fitting, to the distance. Emma was delighted with the excellent arrangement of the rooms and the many little details of service.

Beneath the trees of Sussex, the shadows were heavy and blue. The park unrolled as far as the downs which surrounded the castle. It was summer. Emma wore white muslin, a

little flowered dress, held in by girdles—which she excelled in tying with grace—where they would do most good. She spent hours dressing her hair, which was longer and more beautiful, since she had ended her confinement. In whorls above the ears. In heavy masses at the nape of the neck. On top, in a cascade of thick curls. Carriage-drives, horseback-rides, pleased her equally well. In the evenings, she enlivened the little suppers by candle-light with her gaiety, her laughter, the inconsequence of her desires. She hoped to live, spending lavishly her beauty, her youth, her blood, her life—and gold. . . .

Friends of the baronet soon came to find the two lovers. Among these was one Charles Greville, son of the Duke of Warwick, who did not attempt to hide his admiration for Emma.

Sometimes the pale young man drew her aside to question her, coveting her the while with his black eyes. Where did she come from? What did she seek from life? He made, unconsciously, a movement of the hand as if to model a statue of clay. Other days he spoke to her of art, of his friends, Romney and Thomas Lawrence, of his uncle, Sir William Hamilton, Ambassador at Naples, who owned collections of antiques. He predicted good fortune for her, and then seemed no longer

to notice that she existed. Emma sought him out then, seized his arm and asked if, perchance, she was no longer lovely. He averted his head and, with a gesture of indifference, went away.

Summer, autumn passed; the life they led at Up Park had no other pauses than those given to slumber. One never went to bed until a new dawn had broken. The couple and their friends hunted deer. The days were fleeting. When the rapid night fell, the wind began to whistle. The fire rumbled in the chimneys. The servants brought sweets and strong liquors. One played, whilst awaiting supper. And always the laughter of Emma dominated the festivities: before Christmas, Sir Harry was penniless.

How live at Up Park without money? Already the servants showed less concern when their employers planned to have a party, and Emma's maid paid herself by stealing scarfs from her mistress.

They must go away. The two lovers left their horses, their carriages, their elegant rooms and this aristocratic ease in which Emma had felt so perfectly at home. It was winter. On his arrival in London, the brilliant Harry left his companion at an inn; he was going to plead with his parents, his agents. Emma waited for him, breathing in the scent of a

flower he had brought her—a hot-house rose. This evening Featherstonehaugh was late in returning. Emma grew uneasy. She dreaded the baronet's spleen less than the desertion which she foresaw. Melancholy possessed her, with the prospect of a lonely night and the fear of tomorrow, a situation without any prospects. For eight days Sir Harry had knocked in vain at the doors of his relatives. . . . Emma got up and went to look out the window. It was a dismal winter day. Lifting the curtain, she listened to the voice of London, the rose at her lips. From portmanteaux on the chairs hung the flotsam of a joyous summer. How foolish had been this love which she had just lived at Up Park, and how insensate, and how lustful of pleasure! She pondered on the studious existence she had led in the early days of her liaison with Payne. She saw again his grave, melancholy visage, the faintly marked shadow which the razor left on his fine and chiselled lip, the grey-green eyes of the sailor. She began to make several packages of her dresses and trifles. Did she perhaps think of little Emma, who would soon be a year old and whose support at the home of Grandmother Kidd, John Payne had promised to provide for . . . ?

The bundles were made, the things belonging to Emma set aside. She picked up one of the baronet's coats, which lay on the bed with

traces of powder on the shoulder, then let it drop. She must go—go to meet life, that was calling her. She rang for the servant. Night settled darkly in the muddy streets of the city. A fine, light rain was falling, as if it would never stop, never again let one glimpse the sky. Emma gazed at a round straw basket covered with goat skin, on the cover of which the name of Featherstonehaugh was engraved on a little metal plate; then she got the writing case and, returning, sat down on the baronet's leather trunk beside the window. The words which her pen traced were studded with capitals. She placed the letter in the centre of the pillow on which last night her foolish head had rested against the naked shoulder of her lover. Then she went away with the determination not to yield to regrets. The carriage was at the door. She gave the address of John Payne in a low voice.

It was near the Thames. The cab windows streamed with rain. Emma recognized the brick and wooden houses in the night. A woman hearing the noise stuck her nose out of the door. John Willet Payne had gone to sea two months ago! The windows were closed. The horse which had brought Emma clomped the pavement with its hoofs. Driven by the wind from the river and from the near-distant sea, the rain redoubled in violence and spat-

tered obliquely down upon the carriage. Few lights burned in this district, over which coal-smoke floated in acrid clouds.

Emma was cold. In the clammy clasp of winter she began to fear for the morrow. Since the troubles at Up Park the thought of Charles Greville, the son of the Duke of Warwick, had occurred to her at intervals. In this moment of need, her thoughts went straight to him, because he had seemed, during the festivities at Up Park, the best-bred and most elegant, the most intelligent also, among those young fools who got drunk at Featherstonehaugh's little suppers, or galloped during the hunt beside her. The conversations which they had exchanged in secret had inspired her with confidence. The memory of Charles haunted her, there in the rain, while her indecision amazed the cabby. . . .

After going somewhat astray, she arrived, uneasy and bold at the same time, at Greville's house. But, alas, everything was against her: Greville was also away from London. Could she return to the inn? Her farewell letter would be in Harry's hands. She had told him she was going back to Payne. She did not wish to admit defeat. One of the great strengths of women like Emma, who feel they have a destiny to fulfill, is that they look only ahead of them, like the figures carved on the prows

of ships. After a last instant of hesitation, she abandons herself, for shelter this night, to hazard and adventure: that is, to her coachman.

London was presently attracted by the publicity of one Dr. Graham, concerning a certain Bed of Apollo, on which the feeble or the aged, exhausted by life or played out before their time, could regain, after lying there several minutes, all the faculties of youth. A sort of electric current passed through the body of the "patient" and awakened it. Thereupon, this Cagliostro of London pretended that one became as lusty as an eighteen-year-old. But, as clients did not come in as great a number as Graham wished, he stationed near the couch a goddess of flesh and blood, the Goddess Hygeia, who protected the patient and created a favorable atmosphere for the absorption of the magic current. All London spoke of this Hygeia, of her beauty, of the grace of her attitudes, of her glorious complexion and the expression of her eyes. Drawn by her fame, on his return to London early in 1782, Charles Greville went to see for himself if the enthusiasm raised by this *goddess* was justified.

The apartment was dimly lighted, decorated with Grecian draperies, between columns of imitation marble. A sort of divan with

angular ends occupied the platform on which he discerned the divine Hygeia surrounded by vapors which gushed up from a tripod. Her auburn hair was thick over her forehead, where it came to a point in the shape of a slender heart. Straight nose, with mobile nostrils arched and trembling. Her eyes were as far apart as nature would permit, as if to let her take in more of space; the delicate arch of her brows followed closely the sweep of her eyelids. Between nose and mouth, only a short space, after the manner of ancient statues. Her chin was round and of delicate mold. Her arms emerged, long and supple, from the drapes which enveloped the living statue.

The sight of Greville, immediately recognized through the veil which she had lifted before her to hide her confusion, rekindled in Emma regrets for the luxurious and riotous existence led at Up Park during the previous summer. But Charles insisted, in order to see her features, that she take away the veil. Emma let fall her arm which concealed her face in the crook of her elbow. The two young people gazed upon each other in silence, warned by the rapid beating of their hearts of the great danger or great happiness which was in store for them. With a sublime gesture of modesty, Emma veiled herself again, and the pale young man went away, correct and inscrutable, with-

out having said a word. However, he returned next day. Emma waited for him. He frowned. His tight shut lips expressed contempt—then he smiled, with a gesture of indifference. He tried to joke with her. He was witty and had that which greatly delights a certain type of woman: a fund of good sense and a complete lack of morals. The Goddess Hygeia came to life. She stepped down from the platform and sat beside her visitor. Greville treated her with that mixture of politeness and forwardness which seduces frivolous girls, fascinated with luxury, and desirous of rising above their lowly condition. They parted, happy to have been reunited. Hygeia remounted her platform, readjusted the draperies at her shoulders, and Dr. Graham stretched a new customer on the Bed of Apollo!

II

GREVILLE came back again; then he wrote his first letter, January 10th, 1782. He remonstrated with her, but he did not wish her to suffer too much misery. He agreed to take her away from the doctor; he would forget the past and her conduct towards his dear friend, Harry Featherstonehaugh. There would be nothing to make him repent of his generosity, if he saw that his dear Emily had gained sufficient experience to behave herself properly and please his friends *by the quality of her attitude and the affection she would show them.*

This liaison restored to Emma Lyon the life she loved. She went to plays, she studied singing. Greville encouraged her, steadily and methodically, as much through love of her as for the pleasure of forming an exceptional personality. In order to make people forget her experience with Graham, Emma took the name of Mrs. Hart. Likewise, Mrs. Lyon called herself, henceforth, Mrs. Cadogan. She became her daughter's housekeeper. She excelled in concocting tasty dishes and, when the meal

was over, dressed herself in quiet colors and adopted a becoming demeanor, to accompany Emma to the music-teacher's or to the studio of that painter who was so much in vogue at the time—Romney, a friend of Greville.

When the new Mrs. Hart made his acquaintance, Romney was nearly fifty. He had painted the portraits of royalty, of aristocratic ladies; and beautiful feminine faces which charmed Emma, who was attracted by everything that showed brilliance. He had led a dissipated life; he was strange, reckless, a little mad. He fell in love with his model . . . like a painter! He could see no one but her; he swore by her alone. He painted her as a Bacchante, clad in a tunic and crowned with vine leaves; sometimes, turning a spinning-wheel; again, with tragic face, the arch of her brows contracted, her hair falling down over her shoulders. It was Mrs. Hart's smile that attracted Romney, the plastic lips, so sensual, of her striking and adorable face. In the quivering of the lip corners, the turning-up of the eye-lids towards the temples, her smile was akin to that of certain pictures of Da Vinci wherein the expression of a youthful face conjures up as much of chastity as of sensuousness, and puzzles one about the sex in the intensity of the physiognomy. Romney never wearied of contemplating her face. He

had the look of heaven in his eyes, but his lips were ardent.

When Greville went to the studio in Cavendish Square, his presence added to the pleasure which Mrs. Hart experienced in showing her "attitudes" once more. Greville brought some chosen friends. Emma posed on the model-stand, while a musician was seated at the harpsicord or played the violin. Their harmony served as a stimulus to the ardor of the Bacchante, who smiled her lewd smile on the spectators; and lifted, the next moment, to the ceiling, eyes filled with tears. She did not seem to hear their exclamations, she stretched out her arms, her face darkened . . . she depicted Lucrezia piercing her heart . . . then Clytemnestra. By her expression alone this silent tragedienne evoked little shudderings deep in the hearts of the spectators. These attitudes were as yet mere efforts; yet mastery was revealed in them.

At home Mrs. Hart became a sort of elegant lady who studied singing. Her voice was lovely, rangey, with low, touching notes. Emma was as much in love with her voice as with her body. Romney took her to see statues and pictures. She could grasp an expression, an attitude, instantly. She grew in perfection like a Goddess. She refused to dress according to the dictates of fashion. She knotted

colored girdles about her waist, wore fringed scarfs; she draped herself in their folds, passing the ends under her arms or letting them fall back over her shoulders. She kept the brim of her straw hat tied down over her ears with a knotted ribbon.

One afternoon when a concert was being given at Ranelagh, to which Greville had taken her, a singer was heard in a number that Emma was studying, that she had been singing for several days with her teacher. She began to hum; the neighbors protested. Then Emma sang right out, blending her notes with those of the soloist. This improvised duet, which had irritated them at first, filled the audience with enthusiasm. The pleasure of being acclaimed overcoming her timidity, she climbed up on her chair. Greville tried to make her sit down, by plucking at her dress. He threatened to go home. But Emma's beauty, the glory of her face, unloosed a storm of applause.

The day after the concert at Ranelagh, Greville introduced Emma to Sir William Hamilton. This uncle, of whom she had often heard, had just arrived from Naples, where he was the English Minister to King Ferdinand and Queen Maria Caroline. Through Greville, Emma knew the character of Sir William. She knew he was a dilettante, an art-lover, with delicate tastes. Etruscan vases which he had

collected at Naples and ceded to the English nation ten years before—a transaction for which his "foster brother," the Prince of Wales, now George III, had created him Knight of the Order of the Bath—had given him the fame of a great collector. Such an artist as Emma could not long remain insensible to the qualities of her lover's uncle, a widower, moreover, for two years, and the possessor of a fortune which would one day come to Greville. But the uncle was only fifty-two. And when Emma found herself in his presence, she decided forthwith that, after all, the Ambassador did not look his age. He was amiable, persuasive, witty, and seemed to attach very little importance to accepted prejudices. His sallies, like his repartee, displayed finesse. He was at once fascinated by the beauty of the young woman and even paid several compliments to Mrs. Cadogan, which delighted her. Mrs. Cadogan exerted herself to make the dinner a success. Greville told his uncle about Emma's conduct, the previous evening at Ranelagh. Hamilton begged Mrs. Hart to let him hear her. Sir William pleased her. He applauded, he expressed his satisfaction in words of praise, in the subtle phrases of the diplomat, of the courtier. He stayed late. He was obviously infatuated with Emma. He went home at last after an exquisitely

polite farewell and renewed compliments, very flattering to the vanity of a nineteen-year-old woman, who liked, as do so many of her kind, to test the extent of her power on every man she met.

The next day, at Romney's, the Ambassador showed himself no less impressed. He admired the model in the works of the painter and reserved on the spot, a canvas which Emma coquettishly pointed out to him. Soon Sir William could not leave the society of this young couple who had given a particular freshness to his life since his arrival in London. Morals are easy in society. People smiled a little, however, to encounter this family trio in certain places of pleasure. . . . But the two men were of noble family and young Mrs. Hart was elegant, original, and so beautiful. Forever wearing a different hat, clad daringly, with a sense, always so harmonious, of colors. And then Romney came to make the fourth member of the group. In this little circle of brilliant and noted men, Emma felt at ease. She seemed to desire nothing more in the world. When she chanced to see Sir Harry Featherstonehaugh she even smiled at him amiably and benevolently.

But one day, after supper, while Emma was enacting for the uncle and nephew some of the attitudes which she was so proud to

improvise in Romney's studio—which, moreover, she knew how to make almost chaste and which her beauty ennobled—the uncle took his . . . niece, aside. The nephew had pleaded important business, unavoidable. Emma was by no means ignorant that Greville, in his turn, was financially embarrassed. Money matters, at whatever epoch, have always ruled the fate of courtesans; but, sprung from nothing, Emma told herself that monetary wounds are not necessarily fatal. And then, having entered so fittingly into their intimacy, was not Sir William there to help Charles? Among themselves, the uncle and nephew call each other "Pliny the Elder" and "Pliny the Younger": for very little she could confuse the two. . . . They were philosophers, in their fashion.

The pretext chosen by Greville to leave her alone with Hamilton had not at all deceived Emma, who sensed that Sir William was about to make an attempt to separate her from her insolvent lover. It was the beginning of June: the social season had just finished. The daylight lingered, the sky was extraordinarily clear for London. The blue turned, with delicate nuances, to green in Edgeware Road whither floated the fragrance of the acacias and flowering plane-trees of Hyde Park. She felt a sudden disquiet in her heart, even she

who was a picture of joyous life. But the happiest destinies have known anguish of the heart, at twenty!

Swallows flew close to the window, loudly twittering, in Edgeware Road. Emma's lips smiled at the Ambasssador, but uneasiness wandered in her eyes; their expression had just reflected spontaneously that melancholy whose power upon the hearts of men she already knew. Sir William tried to express his sorrow at causing this young woman the pain which, so regretfully, he was about to bring her. But his nephew had driven him to this resort. . . . Charles could not continue to keep up the pace he had gone for two years. He had to straighten out his affairs, give some immediate satisfaction to his insistent creditors; and the best thing he could do was to go away for some months. Her eyes fixed on Sir William, Emma listened without interrupting him. Tears streamed down her cheeks; fell on her hands which toyed, through force of habit, with the ribbon of her girdle, of the shade of blue which matched her eyes. . . .

If night had not mercifully fallen, the diplomat would have betrayed his predicament. A wealthy marriage could alone restore order to Greville's finances. But since he loved his dear *Emily* a little more than he had ever before loved a woman, he had charged Pliny the

Elder to apply some soothing influence to the breaking of his relations with her. He had even hoped that Sir William, a widower for almost two years, would take his place and offer to provide for the young woman. Actually, the Ambassador would perhaps have given way to this desire; but, before the crushed and broken attitude of Emma, he dared not advance an offer. The tears which he saw glistening in the last dusk of the June evening, the silence of his pseudo-niece, her little sobs of grief, the touching words of sincere affection, which she said about Greville, did not leave him courage to put forth what he wished to propose, and what Greville, who walked about at the moment in the neighborhood, no doubt believed his uncle was in the act of offering.

If Emma consented to go from the nephew to the uncle, to become the uncle's mistress, Charles did not at all doubt that in memory of the past, in recognition of services rendered her, she would safeguard his prospects—and his inheritance—by preventing any dangerous union which might disinherit him. He knew his uncle's wealth; he looked after his interests in the Ambassador's absence, and it was a fortune he intended to preserve for the future.

Hamilton, a noble character and naturally upright, did not dream that the calculations of his nephew could go so far, and he tried to

drive away the thought that, if Greville married, Emma, thus freed, would be an exquisite companion in his Neapolitan palace.

The sentiments of Hamilton and Greville led them thus in parallel fashion towards the same goal. And, however shrewd she might be, Emma seemed to suspect nothing. She increasingly showed her affection for Hamilton, who was going back to Naples. She was losing a kindly, attentive companion, who gave her little gifts, and in whose presence Greville did not dare to rebuke or reprimand her. The last reunions at the Cavendish Square studio, in the misty days of December, were spent almost entirely in conversation. Sometimes Emma leaped upon the table, took a new pose and Romney made a sketch of her. At last, with a fond farewell to his nephew and many affectionate kisses from Emma, Sir William sailed for Naples. As long as he could discern the bright dress of the young woman, the Ambassador waved his hand.

He had not passed Geneva when already his nephew had written him. Hamilton himself sent letters on the road. Emma, on both sides, bore the brunt of the correspondence. One can explain in letters much more readily than one dares to explain with words.

In his letters, Greville dwelt again on the

difficulties of his position: he would be forced to pass six months in Edinburgh if his projected matrimonial alliance should fail. He planned to go to work in the laboratory of Dr. Black, the chemist. He would send Emma into seclusion in the country. . . .

With the Ambassador, amiable, middle-aged, and as yet inexperienced in the grand passion, the thought of Emma became a fixed idea. He saw her live again in everything perfect that he met, in everything enchanting. He had never dissipated, but had remained young; he had grown young, and, for the first time, desire for a woman possessed him and held him with iron hand . . . this man of exquisite culture.

The correspondence between Pliny the Elder and Pliny the Younger was a model of what two dilettanti, two aristocrats of the period could conceive for their pleasure, their egotism, their convenience.

Greville wrote: "Emma makes so much progress, the integrity of her judgment and her good grace are so much more evident than when you left us; she has also become so beautiful that I declare the prospect of separation is even more painful to me. In spite of all, I am confronted with the alternatives of marrying or living in poverty. I shall stick to my resolution and shall not lose my chance if it presents itself. But do not believe that in send-

ing Emma to you I consult my own self-interest alone!

"—If you treat her kindly you can make of her what you will, for she has a generous heart. But by angering her or opposing her you will obtain nothing. She is a true woman. I mean, one who forgets her own interests, who forgets herself, when her affection is on a par with her good sense and when her good sense is swayed by the dictates of friendship."

And this lover—kindly, concerned, and so clever, adds in another letter:

"You shall have the best possible consolation with *the most beautiful woman in London*—the poets and painters claim that she is even more than that!"

Finally Emma promised to go. But on the one condition that after his stay in Scotland, Greville should come and take her away from Naples and bring her back to the little house in Edgeware Road. She could not go away without sorrow. It was the beginning of March and already there were signs of spring, in spite of the chill wind and the fog. She had written to Hamilton that she accepted his "invitation", dwelling upon the coming of Greville in six months' time. Had she a presentiment of what her lover hid from her—he who had begun to negotiate with Lord Middleton with a view to marrying his daughter, the Lady

Henrietta! Did she suspect that beneath the eagerness of the Ambassador to have her come, were hidden schemes that he would not confess? Was she aware of the undertaking, sent by Hamilton from Naples, to pay his nephew's debts—and the will by which he bequeathed him his fortune? All evidence says no. Greville was careful not to speak of these things. To the last kiss, to the last embrace, Emma made him renew his vows to come fetch her in six months' time. She was so beautiful in her sorrow; she held out her arms with words so gentle and heartrending; resting one hand on the arm of Mrs. Cadogan who held a handkerchief to her eyes, and the other on the shoulder of Galwin, a distant cousin of Hamilton, who had come to help her during the journey,—so beautiful that Greville asked himself whether he could not have gained greater advantage from her than he had done.

At last, Emma was helped into the coach, which would take her to Dover. On the fringe of the little garden in Edgeware Road, the branches of a hawthorn, whose encased buds had scarcely burst, stretched forth to bid adieu to "the most beautiful woman in London", who was so eagerly awaited in Naples. . . . At the coach door, Emma held out once again her small, forlorn hand, which waved a last farewell to this lover in whose arms she had slum-

bered for the last time, and who, when the coach had gone, went into the house to write his first letter to the daughter of Lord Middleton, the gracious Lady Henrietta. . . . whom Destiny had decreed he should never marry.

III

WHEN the coach which was bringing Emma was announced, Sir William hastened into the court of honor of the Palace of Sessa. Numerous servants awaited this Mrs. Hart, for whom the entire second floor of the palace had been so luxuriously furnished since winter. It was the end of April. At the approach of evening the blue of the sky softened above the slopes of Pausilipo, which marched down to the sea, covered thickly with white villas, with orange trees in flower, in the cool blue shadows of the setting sun. Sir William hastened forward with the grace of long, straight limbs. He hid his nervousness under the ease of the elegant gentleman, who seems to fulfill a rite in helping a woman to step out of a carriage, before bending over her hand, with a movement quick and restrained—the art of the aristocrat. Emma might have been the Queen of Naples; Maria Caroline herself, the daughter of the august Maria Theresa of Austria, could not have been welcomed with more respect than were Mrs. Cadogan and her daughter.

The Ambassador conducted the traveller, followed by the dumbfounded maids and flunkeys, to the apartments reserved for her. From the round salon she looked upon one of the most beautiful views in the world. Sir William pushed open a window. Emma drank in, as if it were sherbet, the air laden with all the languors of the midday and of the Neapolitan springtime. She could not repress a backward flinging of her beautiful head of heavy hair, covered with a blue hat the shape and shade of which Greville had selected before her departure. Her pupils dilated, her eyelids closed over the deep blue of her eyes. Hamilton was silent. His hand was outstretched to indicate the port, to the left, below the ancient tumbledown roofs—perhaps Sorrento and the vaporous bulk of Capri. Emma recovered herself. Her mother's voice was raised ecstatically over the decoration of the adjoining bedroom. She reopened her eyes. She gazed on the face of Sir William, which seemed to her a little pale, a little yellow. She noticed fine wrinkles running up from the eye-corners to the temples. . . . She flashed at him a smile, which contrasted strangely with the melancholy still reigning in her eyes.

As soon as Sir William had closed the door, Emma flung herself into her mother's arms and in a low voice prayed her to go seek informa-

tion about the English posts. Her eyes lingered on the tables as if she expected to find there already the letter which Greville had promised her.

For dinner, over a white dress which, like the blue hat, Charles had chosen for her, Emma draped herself in an Indian shawl which the Ambassador had just sent up to her. She had no ornaments save the untamed gleams of her heavy hair.

Under the lights, the Ambassador rediscovered all her charms. Sir William had changed his clothes, he had freshly powdered himself; Emma recognized his discreet perfume. Mrs. Cadogan, a little weary, had asked permission to retire. Silver gleamed under the lights of the candelabra. Outside the windows, day passed into eternity beyond the sea. The sound of singing came up from the city; music thrummed upon guitars, which made one dream of love. Roses were strewn upon the cloth near Emma's place; but scarcely was she seated when she gave voice to her obsession; she spoke of Greville, of his forthcoming voyage, of his promise to come fetch her on his return from Scotland in five or six months. After supper, when they were alone, the Ambassador confided to "the most beautiful woman of London" that he had willed his fortune to his nephew. Then, to gain still more the

goodwill of the woman he now sheltered, he offered her some finery that had belonged to his wife.

In her room, Emma stood at the window. A reddish cloud, which waxed and waned, danced above Vesuvius. Emma could not take her eyes away from it. The night was liquidly soft. One could hear the bustle of the voluptuous city. She thought with regret of Edgeware Road. She did not sleep until after she had wet her handkerchief with her tears and penned to her lover, far beyond the seas, her vows of fidelity.

The posts went to England only once a week. When Emma awakened, Mrs. Cadogan stood beside her bed. About ten o'clock the Ambassador had flowers sent up to her; the room was filled with carnations, fragrant as cloves, in their setting of pungent leaves of geranium rosa.

Intimate friends of Sir William were invited to supper. Emma did not come down to the drawing room until the last guest had arrived. Her entrance caused a sensation which made her blush slightly, in spite of the fact that she was already used to the excitement which her appearance always produced and in which she found an unfailing gratification. She remembered without effort the teachings of Greville and acted shyly the part of hostess with

such grace that the chorus of praise swelled to the end of the evening. Sir William, beaming, overwhelmed her with attention, like a father who assists at his daughter's début. The luxury of her new life, the sweetness of Neapolitan nights—could these triumph in Emma's heart over the memory of Charles? The only happiness she knew in the midst of the brilliant life she led during the days that glided by in the heart of this languorous city, like the waves on which the sunlight played, was in the moments she consecrated to Greville.

Her first letter was a tender appeal to her absent lover, refreshing in its naïveté of phrase and spelling:

"I try to appear as cheerful before Sir William as I could, and I am sure to cry the moment I think of you. For to live without you is impossible. I love you to that degree that at this time there is not a hardship upon hearth, either of poverty, hunger, cold death, or even to walk barefooted to Scotland to see you, but what I would undergo.

"Therefore, my dear, dear Greville, if you do love me, for my sake try all you can to come here as soon as possible. I find it is not either a fine horse, or a fine coach, or a pack of servants, or plays or operas can make happy. It is you that 'as it in your power to make me very happy or very miserable. I respect

Sir William, I have a great regard for him, as the uncle and friend of you, and he loved me Greville. But he can never be anything nearer to me than your uncle and my sincere friend. He never can be my lover. I belong to you, Greville, and to you only I will belong, and nobody shall be your heir-apearant.

"Pray, my dear Greville, do write me word, if you want any money. I am afraid I distressed you. But I am sure Sir William will send you some, and I told him he must help you. . . ."

The letter finished, Emma sealed it with care. She did not want the Ambassador to see it. She placed it in a drawer until it could be entrusted to the post for London the next day by Mrs. Cadogan.

Sir William took advantage of the troubled state of her feelings. But he acted with the prudence of maturity and the confidence of a man whom love has not yet caused to lose his insight and his subtlety. He was apparently occupied only in carrying out the programme decided on in the agreement made between Greville and her, to perfect her in the studies of music and singing. He even provided teachers of Italian and French, for Neapolitan society scarcely understood English.

Before a very few friends one evening, when the candles had commenced to gutter

in the breeze which blew through the windows open upon the blue night, for it was the month of June, the Ambassador, who had bought a classic statue that day, asked Mrs. Hart to reproduce its pose; which Emma did forthwith. Like a silver carpet upon the sea, the reflection of the moon spread over the city rising in tiers upon the hillside. A plume of rose-colored smoke crowned Vesuvius. The air was moist, stirred by the breeze. Emma stood in the recess of a French window, bathed by the nocturnal light, in the dancing glow of the candles. She stood erect in her white gown, she raised an arm which she bent, laying her hand upon her shoulder. But classic statues are expressionless; while the features of Emma conjured up a sorrow tragic, beyond all consolation. For several seconds she rested thus immovable. She thought of Greville who, so far, had written her only one letter and that so cold! . . . The softness of the night inflamed her; she had refused to give herself to Sir William, but she was young, ardent; she was beautiful; homage had been hers from the moment she appeared in this city of singers and musicians. That very afternoon, when she was stepping down from her English carriage, a common workman, his chest bronzed by the sun, tore off his jacket and impulsively threw it on the ground that she might put her feet upon it. She had raised her

eyes to thank him with a smile; his look was brown in his saffron face. . . . Emma reached towards the Milky Way. The bravos of her admirers seemed to have plunged her more deeply into her melancholy. Then with a slow musical rhythm, she took other attitudes; those of the Cavendish Square studio. Her arms rose and fell; they formed against her cheek and over her head of sombre hair a soft arc in which her hands moved gracefully; her face lighted in a smile—that of the Bacchante; her head rested upon her shoulder, her lips aslant; her eyes glistened between narrowed lids. . . .

The guests acclaimed it a masterpiece. Sir William was raised to the highest heaven. He planned to have made for her a great gold frame in which she could pose and give the illusion of a tableau vivant. But Mrs. Hart, who turned, at last, her head towards the guests, her arms hanging listlessly down at her sides, showed them a face on which the falling tears traced lucent lines. . . .

Society remained aloof from the newcomer. In the opposition she had to overcome, Sir William was a great help and became more dear to her each day. Emma, who led an irreproachable life and cherished in her heart a great unhappy love for Greville, wished to find in the social whirl a counter-irritant to

her sorrow: "I do not know myself since you are absent, you are so dear to me," she wrote him. . . . "Answer me that I may kiss your name." Social intercourse is possibly never more than a palliative for sorrow.

Although Greville had been paid by Hamilton to abandon Emma, she continued to have for him that physical love, that sensual desire which prostitutes feel for the pimp to whom they afford a living. She said to him in one of those plaintive love letters, which deserve to live and which show to what depths of feeling she attained: "Pray write to me, and don't write in the stile of a freind, but a lover. For I won't hear a word of freind. It shall be all love and no freinship. Sir William is ever freind. But we are lovers.

"How with cool indifference, to advise me to go to Sir William! Oh, that Worst of all! If I was with you, I would murder you and myself both.

"Nothing shall ever do for me, but going home to you. If that is not to be, I will except (sic) nothing, I will go to London, their go into every excess of vice tell I dye. My fate is a warning to young whomen never to be two good. For now you have made me love you, (now) you (have) made me good, you have abandoned me; and some voilent end shall finish our connexion, if it is to finish——"

Sir William is the man who provides one's living, whose gold pays for what is bought, luxuries as well as necessities; but to whom one is tied closely as by a chain. A caprice of his can upset one's existence. Should he desire another woman, inferior and ugly though she be, one would have to give way, leave perhaps. . . . His is a fond guardianship, ever-varying and enchanting; but the more gilded it is the heavier it becomes. Affectionate, almost fatherly, he is never more than the man who pays for pretty shoes and bread. . . . And in the regard that one has for him, how is it possible to judge the extent of one's respect for his money, or the terror that he may fail one!

Emma very quickly perceived that in a city like Naples the Court is the centre around which everything in society gravitates. The rulers were beloved. They governed as they pleased. But with the riches of the past, with a lay-figure of a minister and a frivolous King much in pursuit of women. One figure dominated: the Queen, all the more alluring by reason of her inaccessibility. . . . Emma again gave several displays of her imitative art before a wider circle. Sir William wrote to his nephew that he was proud of their pupil: "She is a miracle of cleverness, a prodigy of beauty, of youth and tact." The echoes of these soirées reached the Queen. Maria Caroline, to whom the

Prince of Dietrichstein spoke with enthusiasm of Mrs. Hart, would not receive her, but Ferdinand wished to meet her, some evening, in the gardens of Pausilipo. The future of kings is not too deeply compromised by a meeting in a garden! Sir William thanked the king for his royal pleasure and communicated Ferdinand's wish to Emma.

It was still another exploit in adventure, a step forward, a man to approach, on whom to try one's powers, before whom to display one's charms. But Ferdinand could not speak English. The teacher of Italian was desired to come the next day two hours earlier than usual. The Ambassador had thought up some phrases during the night. Emma would never have a better opportunity to utilize her histrionic talents. It would not displease her to dazzle this King a little. He was known to be fond of such meetings, but Ferdinand had vulgar tastes and preferred women of the type found in the factories of Caserta amongst the lower classes. He was a great hunter, with a very long nose. His subjects had nicknamed him "Big Nose."

Whilst the teacher of Italian made her repeat the phrases composed by Hamilton, insisting on the proper accent; and while the teacher of French, sent for in his turn, was equally insistent on his subject, Emma was

admiring herself in the looking-glass. She had not been so joyous since her arrival in Naples. Her outbursts of laughter filled her apartments in the Palace of Sessa. The afternoon was blue. The sky, the sea, the coasts, from Castellammare to Sorrento, were bathed in trembling light. Clad in a light robe, Emma performed before the mirror deep curtsies, from which she was slow, slow to rise, her head lowered, her hands crossed on her bosom, in the humble and bent-forward attitude of an angel of Tiepolo. Presently these were only half motions, light, ill-defined, that the gloom of the gardens, the evening, blotted out. . . .

Saturday morning, when she awakened, Mrs. Cadogan stood at the foot of her bed:

"Your Majesty overwhelms me!" said Mrs. Hart to her in French, "Truly I never believed there were so many kindnesses, Sire!"

Mrs. Cadogan was charmed. Sir William appeared. He was elated to see such gaiety on the face of his idol. He held a letter in his hand; Emma recognized Greville's stationery. Mrs. Cadogan had gone.

"What does Charles say?" asked Emma, seizing the letter. Perhaps the crafty Sir William waited only for this move. . . . Not a word of regret over Emma's absence; on the contrary, all kinds of plans for the future and

advice on the way to break down the last resistance of dear *Emily*, and become her lover. . . . "It is unparalleled," said he, "that after a long siege a woman will not give up——" Emma threw aside the pages covered with Charles's regular hand-writing. She began to speak of the gown she planned to wear at the evening festivities, as she turned her head away. Her joy had vanished.

This passion, over which she had despairingly brooded since her departure from Edgeware Road, this love, watered with secret tears—was it then dead forever? Emma arose and ran to her desk. Like every woman who has deeply loved, only to be abandoned, she threatened:

"——write, for nothing will make me so angry (as your silence) : and it is not in your interest to disoblige me, for you don't know the power I have hear. Onely I never will be his mistress. If you affront me, I will make him marry me."

Greville would be frightened. He would answer this time. In the evening when she went to meet the King her future was mapped out in her giddy, rebellious head; the festivities were more delightful than ever in her eyes. Marry Sir William? . . . Why not? . . . Emma was a sort of queen herself since kings asked to meet her. . . .

Greville's letter had caused her profound humiliation. She at last understood that she was no longer loved, that Charles had exchanged her, bartered her, sold her. Without this letter Emma would have felt some uneasiness at being presented to Ferdinand. Now she longed for it. According to the happiness or chagrin which she was going to experience at the outcome of the interview, she would know if she dared risk playing the game she planned, and if she was clever enough to win. . . .

The night-air of Pausilipo filled her with voluptuousness. So calm was the air that she could hear the sigh of a wave which died like a breath upon the shore. It was a night in July —in Naples! Glow-worms wandered at the height of a man from the ground; their little bodies, lucent and winged, gleamed intermittently in the depths of the thickets. Balsamy perfume mingled with that of the flowers with their white corollas. She caught glimpses of the sea and the vanishing lights of a boat. . . .

They knew—everybody knew that Ferdinand was going to meet Mrs. Hart. What had they not whispered already! But the Queen had desired that the King give her from his own mouth details concerning this woman over whom all Naples was agog. Scarcely had Sir William helped his companion out of the carriage when they were surrounded. Men

who, up to now, had not been presented asked to be introduced to Mrs. Hart and came to kiss her hand.

From a distance, the approach of the King was announced. The courtiers scattered, but all set themselves to watch. They wanted to enjoy this scene, for which they had waited three days. The Ambassador presented Mrs. Hart to Ferdinand. The girl of Hawarden, the Goddess Hygeia, the model of Romney, made an obeisance—a reverence in which the most fastidious of the spectators watching from the shadows, could find nothing to criticise. The King helped the beautiful Englishwoman to rise. They conversed. Emma had not forgotten her lessons. She spoke Italian, she spoke French; Sir William displayed all the talents of the courtier and the superb grace of the man of the salon; then he feigned distraction and stayed a pace in the rear. He had just seen the Duke of Gloucester. The King advanced alone to Emma's side. . . .

"I will make him marry me! . . ."

The King of Naples was a gay dog, not overly civilized, with an elongated nose, who under the varnish of politeness with which his teachers had coated him, had the ways of a wolf-hunter and chaser of village girls. He had neither grace nor intelligence. Mrs. Hart possessed the gift of accurately evaluating peo-

ple—even kings. Her good sense was a quality to which Pliny the Younger and Pliny the Elder had often done homage. Near the King, she felt no timidity. She readily summoned up on the contrary, all her woman's tricks as if she had an intuition that this mummy would become one of the most indispensable collaborators in her good fortune. Greville should begin to feel uneasy at having rid himself so casually of a woman who still loved him.

In the darkness, Emma laughed—laughter like the prelude of a song. She spoke of her love for music; French and Italian words hesitated, stumbled on her lips. What matter! Her lips were so lovely! Maria Caroline would have next day a faithful account of this evening, and an enthusiastic narration of her husband's interview with the beautiful Englishwoman.

The King had reached the lighted terrace. He made the Ambassador's companion sit beside him. They were observed; but Sir William was too clever not to sense the danger of letting the interview be prolonged. He feared that Mrs. Hart could not carry it off any longer with the same success. He advanced towards the King, bowed, took up the conversation. Emma drew a deep breath; she was thankful for this hand, smooth as satin, which came to sustain her just when she needed it. Her affection for Sir William increased.

In the carriage which took them back to the Palace of Sessa, Emma, intoxicated with her success, was joyous. She became again the carefree and reckless child who used to ride at Up Park. She wanted to shout. She took the Ambassador's hand; then she gently nipped his ear with her teeth. Sir William laughed. He turned his head towards her. In the gloom their faces felt the warmth of nearness, then met; their lips were joined. For the first time Charles Greville's uncle felt in surrender against his breast "the most beautiful woman of London" —whose head was still full, in spite of her esctasy, with Greville's letter and the reply she had dashed off in an instant, with crazy capitals scattered through her words:

"If you affront me I will make him marry me!"

Emma did not prolong the kiss. Scarcely had the carriage landed them in the court when she again became the reserved companion that Sir William had known since her arrival from London.

Emma went to work with zest. Her singing-teacher was lodged at the Sessa Palace and she took from him as many as three lessons a day. Her voice had gained in scope and, above all, in tone, in strength, in dramatic force; as, likewise, thanks to the Italian method, in the

power to execute brilliant passages and in sparkling contrasts in the scenes of pure comedy and in vocalizing. In French and Italian the same progress. This woman, who could have sated herself with the knowledge of being considered exceptionally beautiful, amazes one by the ardor she brought to her work. She seemed to find in study a surcease from melancholy, perhaps from sensuality; and she seemed to wish to give thus a flowering, a crown, to her beauty.

Goethe came to Naples. He was received and fêted. He became great friends with the Ambassador, who gave him even the right to explore his *cellar*, in which he stored the pieces of his collection, destined for England, and among which the poet recognized marble statues and bronzes taken from the ruins of Pompeii. . . . But Goethe was scarcely forty years old and Emma was real literary material.

"Sir William Hamilton," wrote the poet in the Journal of his voyage, "who is always English Ambassador here, having been so long a time occupied with the arts in an amateur capacity, after having so long made a study of nature, has found the sum of all the pleasures of nature and of art in a beautiful young girl. He has her at his home. She is a twenty-year-old Englishwoman. She is very beautiful and very beautifully formed. He has dressed

her in a Greek costume, which becomes her marvellously well. She lets her hair flow free, takes two shawls and goes through such a variety of attitudes, gestures and expressions, that at the end one thinks he has had a beautiful dream.

"What a thousand artists would be happy to produce, one sees here accomplished in movement, with a surprising diversity. Kneeling, standing, sitting, lying down, serious, sad, wanton, exalted, repentant, seductive, menacing, uneasy; one expression succeeds the other and flows from it. She knows how to adapt to each expression the folds of her veil, how to modify them and make a hundred different head-coverings with the same fabric. However, the elderly baronet holds the candle for her and he is devoted to her with all the fervor of his soul. He finds, recombined in her, all the classics, all the beautiful profiles of Sicilian coins; even up to the Apollo Belvedere. In a word, this amusement is unique. We have already had two evenings of it."

Each day's success broke down, little by little, Emma's resistance to him who helped her with so much delicacy and tact. Sir William became her lover. From slight concessions as pledges of her gratitude and tenderness, the elegant Ambassador became at last master of

that body which he loved with a love fanatic, of this creature who pleased not only his senses but even the most esoteric emotions of the dilettante. Emma was faithful to him. She knew the measure of what he had braved, what he had not feared to face for her sake. What he had done and, above all, what he was prepared to do—if she took it into her mind to desire it. . . . Unforeseen circumstances were about to favor her. She was at the age when famous careers receive indispensable collaboration, at the very moment when they need it most.

Emma gave up her apartment, which was transformed into a music-room. It was here she sang Nina and gave those displays of attitudes which the enthusiasm of her guests soon made famous throughout European society. She moved down to the floor occupied by Sir William, who now scarcely ever left her, night or day.

The readiness with which Sir William accepted the eventuality of marriage, immediately convinced Emma of the uselessness of this union, if the Ambassador should, on account of it, lose his position and have to give up the sumptuous and easy life of Naples which so agreeably suited his tastes. A single person, a woman, and the only one, precisely, with whom Emma could not count on join-

ing forces, had the power to maintain Sir William in his office and accord to Emma the position which his name would permit her to occupy—that person was the Queen.

Emma did not know the Queen, except for having seen her from a distance at religious and state ceremonies. She had seen the silhouette, regal, though a trifle stout, of the daughter of Maria Theresa, whose glance embodied a cold clearness, which, nevertheless, must have quickened when her senses stirred....

On Maria Caroline, Mrs. Hart's position would depend if Hamilton decided upon marriage. From her daily conversations with her protector Emma knew all about the Court. The intrigues which went on there were familiar to her. She knew the influence on the Queen of the Prime Minister, John Acton, who had caused himself to be called Giovanni Acton. This Irishman, born at Besançon, was fifty years old. He had been Maria Caroline's lover for several years. Emma received him at the Embassy, beguiled him, and entrusted to him her praises of the Queen. The sovereign did not fail to send back to Mrs. Hart in exchange some kind words about a gown she had worn, a compliment on her coiffure at the San Carlo. The services that England, which held the Mediterranean, could render to the Government of the Two Sicilies, Maria Caroline, more

than Emma, could not fail to appreciate. But, whatever might be the interests at play, Mrs. Hart was not, could not be admitted to the Court nor presented to the Queen.

An elderly relative of Sir William by her first marriage with the departed Duke of Hamilton, who by her second marriage had become the Duchess of Argyle, was ill. Her doctors, or the whims of a woman once beautiful and who had been a society leader in her day, had brought her to Naples. Hamilton hastened to visit the Duchess. She, knowing already about Emma, expressed a desire to meet her. An aging woman, lately idolized, rarely considers with kindliness of heart or serenity of spirit another woman, youthful, splendidly beautiful, and much courted. . . .

However, the Duchess of Argyle took a liking to Mrs. Hart—a liking that ended only with life. Emma learned in the intimacy of this once lovely woman, subtle distinctions in a knowledge of which she herself was lacking; little tricks of coquetry that a courtesan would find out for herself in her own world, but which were something different for a lady of quality. The Duchess was *rotten with style*. She had the tricks of speech which reveal the elegant lady; charming little ways more diffi-

cult to imitate than grand manners, and much more revelatory of good breeding. Emma hastened to her the first thing in the morning, brought her flowers, sweets, planned little walks for her, took her to visit the gardens. She gave her the support of her arm, humbled herself. She was considerate. She paid the Duchess every little attention. Soon the Duchess could not get along without her.

The English have always easily left their own firesides to go and live in far places, under pleasant skies. They were numerous in Naples, but, after the difficulties of the voyage, these immigrants who came to end their days on the enchanted slopes of Vesuvius, remained from choice. This self-centred aristocracy was composed of people worn out by illness or boredom, whom the proximity of death made by no means more altruistic or less narrow in their prejudices. Emma had not been able to rub shoulders with this society, in spite of the Ambassador's influence. The goodwill, the enthusiasm of some few, did not at all suffice, nor yet the good wishes and gallantries of the King.

Emily, who had resumed her correspondence with Greville, recounted to him on this subject one of the amenities of the king:

"On Sunday he dines at Paysilipo, and he always comes every Sunday before the casina in his boat to look at me. We had a small de-

plomatic party, and we was sailing in our boat, the K directly came up, put his boat of musick next us, and made all the French horns and the wholl band play. He took of his hat, and sett with his hatt on his knees all the while, and when he was going to land he made his bow, and said it was a sin he could not speak English. But I have him in my train every night at the Villa or Oppera."

The influence of the Duchess of Argyle, her intimacy with Mrs. Hart, prevailed finally over opposition. Soon her fellow countrymen showed more eagerness to fête her than the Neapolitans, who had so readily appreciated her beauty.

Mrs. Hart was the woman of the hour. Ferdinand IV boasted of her splendid bearing, her conduct "irreproachable, from which all the women of Naples should henceforth take example."

Soon Mrs. Hart no longer doubted, thanks to the devotion of her envoys and her advocates, that Maria Caroline, whom she could not approach and, consequently, could not vanquish by using her familiar weapons, would be her secret confidante before becoming, perhaps, her most faithful ally. Let the marriage take place and Lady Hamilton would be received in the only palace of Naples which she could not enter today: the Court.

When the King went hunting in the neighborhood, did Mrs. Hart wish to make one of the party, Ferdinand invited her. He had for her all the respect which he would show to an Ambassadress of England. Society accepted her with the same good grace and the same complaisance. Emma gave soirées at which she could count more than four hundred people and (as one would still say—today when the world is much more democratic) :—the pick of the lot,—of those who bore a title or held any rank in Naples. She welcomed the guests with that nonchalant and dauntless grace, that beautiful smile of dazzling teeth between sensual lips, that incomparable radiance in her look, which kept the attention of the entire company fixed upon her. The curiosity which she sensed around her, the admiration which she breathed in the air of the salons, brought all her natural gifts into play. She had not only to welcome the guests, to make delicate distinctions among them, to be and yet not be, mistress of the house; but to know how to make herself pleasant to certain women who did her a great honor by their presence: the Russian Ambassadress, Madame Stravowska, the Duchesse de Fleurus, the Spanish Ambassadress, the Princess of Monaco. . . . She had talked, she had laughed during dinner. She had a gift of mimicry and could easily make fun of

one. She saw the comical aspects of people and possessed a sense of humor. But what kept her from ridiculing, according to her habit and caprice, was the realization that, just now, all the married men who were her guests, of whatever rank, had come *with their wives* . . . at last!

However, it did not suffice for her that the salons of the Embassy were filled with almost as many Princes as one could count at the Royal Palace and that around Maria Caroline there was no one this evening, no one who could be called someone; not even Acton, her lover. After having made them marvel at her beauty and grace and astonished them with her tact and her attributes as an Ambassadress, she wished to shine as a singer. She would sing, sing before the Banti, the star of the San Carlo!

What Ambassadress, forsooth, could pretend to so many gifts?

Mrs. Cadogan, the former Mary Lyon, cook at Hawarden, was there, in the doorway, dressed with simplicity, with graceful mien, in a gown of grey satin. She concealed behind her fan the emotion which her daughter did not experience. When Emma prepared to sing, when the hum of conversation ceased, when silence reigned, whilst one could hear the chairs scrape lightly on the parquetted floor, Sir William's glance met that of Mrs. Cado-

gan. The mother had eyes the color of her daughter's. The Ambassador saw suddenly an elusive, a faint resemblance to Emma, which touched him to the heart. These two people, who loved her above all and who had devoted their lives to her, who were the firm bases of her happy existence, exchanged a smile, a flicker of the eyelids. They understood each other, trembling with the same nervousness, glowing with the same happiness.

And Emma's voice took flight—warm, brilliant, sure and impassioned. . . .

"*Che maravigliosa voce!*" cried out the Banti.

Official portrait painter to the Court of France, intimate with Queen Marie Antoinette, Madame Vigée-Lebrun arrived opportunely at Naples at the first breath of the Revolution. Court favorites are most sensitive to the dangers of a storm. Madame Vigée-Lebrun had quitted Versailles to seek throughout Europe other careless princes and kings whom the fear of death and the tribulations of a decline of power had not caused to lose their sense of propriety and kingship. She came to Naples to meet the sister of her Queen. The warm climate, the smiling land, appeared lovelier and more attractive in the hours of tragedy.

Emma, who loved attitudes, who loved painting—who did not, perhaps, love painting except because she loved herself and because painters had always sought her out—Emma wished to pose again, to experience once more the smell of colors and again look upon, as in the studio of Romney, the reverse side of a canvas on which a great artist was engaged in reproducing her in all her splendor. She knew of the arrival of the celebrated and sophisticated artist and sent the Ambassador to her. Hamilton asked that the picture of Mrs. Hart be the first which Vigée-Lebrun should paint during her stay in Naples.

After having agreed on the price of one hundred louis—a price over which Sir William, as a collector accustomed to defend himself against the demands of merchants and the exorbitancy of artists, haggled with a certain asperity, Mrs. Hart was conducted to the Inn of Santa Lucia where Madame Lebrun was staying. . . .

"The day that Sir William Hamilton presented her to me he wished that I see her in action," wrote Madame Lebrun in her Souvenirs. "I was enraptured. But she was dressed like everybody else, which shocked me. I made her put on a robe like those which I wear when painting at my ease and which are called smocks: she added shawls to drape herself,

which she knew very well how to do; after that, one could copy her different expressions and make an entire picture gallery. . . .

"Nothing was more fascinating than the faculty Lady Hamilton had acquired of lending to her features an expression of sorrow or of joy and of marvellously posing to represent different personages. With flashing eye, hair dishevelled, she would show you a charming Bacchante; then all at once her face would reveal sorrow and you would see an admirable repentant Magdalen."

One morning when he had just left Emma, a bowl in her hand, before Madame Vigée-Lebrun, who was beginning another picture of Mrs. Hart as a Bacchante, Hamilton asked the favor of a private audience with Maria Caroline. It was before the meeting of the Council, at which the Queen never failed to assist—her mother Maria Theresa having stipulated in the marriage-contract that from the birth of her first male child the Queen of Naples should enter into the Councils. . . . With all manner of respectful greetings and that humility which one never sees so perfectly displayed as by great nobles in the presence of Royalty, Hamilton asked the Queen to do him the honor of advising him about a decision that he would not dream of making without having received her assent to it.

Maria Caroline guessed that the English Ambassador was going to speak to her about his marriage with Mrs. Hart and that he would not say a word and she would not make a reply, of which his beautiful mistress would not be informed. This petticoated diplomat, this vigorous woman with heavy hips, with obstinate chin and chilly eye, who ruled her husband, who was the mistress of her Prime Minister, cared very little if the future Lady Hamilton had a past or was not of good family. Princes deem themselves of a nature so superior to that of mere humans that, in the depths of their heart, every difference of lesser rank escapes them. Accustomed to his excellent manners and to the services which the Ambassador had rendered her for almost twenty years, Maria Caroline, more than ever anxious to count on the support of England, did not let him finish his phrase so happily balanced, so elegantly servile. She said, not without exuberance, not even without a deal of praise, that she admired Mrs. Hart more than anybody else in Naples, that the King had respect for her perfect bearing, her elegance, her beauty. . . . that they could not wish a more beautiful Ambassadress at their Court, and that she awaited only the consummation of the marriage to have the satisfaction of having the new Lady Hamilton presented to her. Then the Queen insisted that

the Ambassador be present at the Council, an honor extended to him on more than one occasion. The doings in France were the sole subject of discussion. But Hamilton had only one desire . . . to go and tell his beloved Emma, who was waiting for him, the result of his mission.

The letters to Greville soon became an amusement for Emma. Their irony was of a superior quality. How she avenged herself for having been sold, exchanged for the payment of Charles's debts, and a will! One cannot picture her writing without seeing her interrupt herself to laugh until the tears came to her eyes.

After the announcement of a quiet trip to London, which Greville forthwith advised against, she thrust back at him in charming, feminine fashion, with the subtleness and savagery of a cat:

"You need not be afraid of me in England. We come for a short time, and that time must be occupied in business, and to take our last leave. I don't wish to attract notice. I wish to be an example of good conduct, and to show the world that a pretty woman is not allways a fool. All my ambition (is) to make Sir William happy, and you will see he is so. As to our seperating houses, we can't do it, or why should we? You can't think 2 people, that (h)as lived five years with all the domestick

happiness that's possible can seperate, and those 2 persons that knows no other comfort but in each other's company, which is the case I assure you with ous, tho you bachelors don't understand it. But you can't imagine two houses must seperate ous. No, it can't be, and that you will be a judge of, when you see us.

"We shall be with you in the spring, and return heer in November, and the next year you may pay ous a visit. We shall be glad to see you. I shall allways esteem you for your relationship to Sir William, and having been the means of me knowing him. As to Sir William, I confess to you I doat on him. Nor I never can love any other person but him. This confession will please you, I know."

Greville replied; not to Emma—what could he find to say to her?—but to the Ambassador. He warned him that he was making a sad mistake, that his career would be ruined. . . .

But the success won in advance from Maria Caroline, Emma's fine conduct, the welcome which had been given her in Neapolitan society, the obstacles she had surmounted, gave Sir William courage to undertake the inevitable struggle.

Up to the time of departure, the soirées, the dinners, the music, the displays of attitudes, followed one another at the Embassy. Emma sang with such success that extravagant en-

gagements were offered her. . . . She announced her arrival to Romney and promised to pose for him every day during her stay of five or six months: "Keep of me, who triumph today, the opinion that you had of old in the darkest hours of my career."

At length, on the first Monday in May, on a warm and scented afternoon, the three people in their carriage, for Mrs. Cadogan was making the trip, left Naples. Whilst friends kissed her hands, Emma thought of her arrival there five years before in her little blue hat that Greville had asked her to wear and had helped her to fix—so that she would be prettier and more desirable when she stepped out of the carriage before his uncle, to whom he had secretly sold her. And she, at that time, thought she had come only to amuse him for a few months and to take music and singing lessons in his care! . . .

IV

WHEN Sir William and Mrs. Hart, accompanied by Mrs. Cadogan, reached London, the social season was in full swing. To the eyes of Emma, accustomed for five years to the palm trees, the sands, and the cypresses of exotic Naples, which reminded one in so many ways of the neighboring countries of Africa, these green parks seemed like Eden. As a spirited animal sniffs the air of vast plains, she retasted her adventurous youth, on seeing once more the city where she had first launched into love. . . . Greville hastened to visit them; striving mightily to hide his rage and chagrin. A flash of triumph shone in the deep, sapphire eyes of Mrs. Hart. For more than a thousand days she had awaited this moment, which avenged her upon the man who had remained deaf to her pleadings and to the divine tenderness which filled her first letters. She gave him her hand to kiss but she no longer yielded her lips. . . . "It shall be all love and no friendship," she had written him. . . . "Sir William is ever friend. . . . but we are lovers!" How many women have written thus!

Time had passed. . . . Emma found herself once more in her lover's presence . . . her heart-beats did not quicken. The nervousness which preludes the first words exchanged, the first caresses, she waited for but did not experience. Sir William, a trifle aged, but always smiling and suave, stood behind Emma. Mrs. Cadogan surveyed the scene with that air of good fellowship which transcends conventions and remains human. Greville felt subdued before this trio. He lifted his head. He also had faded. In his pale face, there remained nothing of the young man. Emma alone was as lovely as ever. These five years had only added to her graces. The tones of her voice had softened, she was refined in body and mind. Long hours of intimacy with the Duchess of Argyle had borne fruit. A mind as subtle as Greville's saw, in an instant, how real with her all these things were. Merely in the way she said, "My dear," she showed how much the courtesan had been superseded by the lady. Never had Emma experienced a greater desire to act the Ambassadress, the Lady Hamilton, than at this first meeting with her former lover. And to show him that he no longer counted with her, to show how little she cared for the influence he might have kept over Sir William, she expressed her regret at being obliged to go and leave him alone with his uncle. . . . but her

beloved Romney, her "dear father" was waiting for her.

Hamilton knew how this young man with the too sharp nose was going to reason with him; what pretexts would be summoned up to discourage him from marrying Emma Lyon. And he marvelled that she could go away so deliberately. The departure of Emma was a masterpiece of subtleness, of elegance, of ease, of self-mastery. . . .

"I have brought you an urn from Pompeii," said the uncle, to break the ice, as the sound of the carriage disappeared in the distance.

Romney had become thin, two deep lines furrowed his face. But what ecstasy, what sudden fire in his glance when he saw again her whom instantly he christened "The Divine Lady!" In that instant, were she never to be married, Emma felt well paid for the fatigues of the journey. Beyond the walls of this studio, the entire world could talk and slander; the Hamiltons, from the first to the last, and all the nobility of the Court of England could protest, could set themselves to thwart her plans, could seek to ruin the schemes to which she had devoted for several years her secret efforts: it would not bother her; she did not care about it! In this studio she found again her divinity, the true joys of the woman and the artist. . . . When her beauty had faded, when old age had

come, these pictures would remain, . . . eternal testimonies of the power she had wielded over her contemporaries, and would fix the duration of Emma Lyon's fame amongst the living and the dead.

Emma did not dream of going to see her child, Payne's child . . . little Emma. The maternal fibres—it is thus that one gives to sentiments the attributes of organs—maternal fibres had not yet developed in this woman who knew how to cultivate her natural gifts so well. She had not had time to become a mother. She did not at all experience the eager desire to take the child in her arms, to learn with her own eyes that she was lovely, to hear the sound of her voice, to cause smiles to awaken under her caresses and to dry those tears of youth whose source dwells deep in the anguished hearts of mothers. . . .

At Romney's, Emma was in her element. She gave him so many poses, she varied her attitudes with an art so instinctive, so spontaneous that he found again his energy and vitality. In a few days he had blocked out several pictures. When the arrival of Mrs. Hart was announced, the Prince of Wales ordered two portraits, modelled on her. A Bacchante once again . . . But Romney sketched a Joan of Arc, and a Mary Magdalen and a Constance, destined to be hung in the Shakespeare Gallery.

In spite of the warnings of Greville, Mrs. Hart lived in the same apartment with Sir William. They gave there each evening a dinner or supper to friends of the Ambassador and even to some of his relatives, bachelors, whom they tried to conquer, to ally to them for the sake of the propaganda which it was necessary to bring to bear on their marriage. But in becoming Lady Hamilton, Emma meant to keep her reputation as a lovely woman and an artiste. She sang Nina, as at Naples, before twenty-five or fifty people. One would think, on the day following, that there was no other woman worth talking about in London society gossip. She had added several attitudes to her programme, with the famous shawls. And as she had never been more beautiful, it is easy to imagine the enthusiasm and subsequent comments. New impresarios came to offer her engagements. Emma was flattered but answered that she would think it over . . . and went to pose for Romney. But it became difficult to give the promised hours for sittings to her old friend. Each day increased the number of visits she had to return, the number of invitations.

The foremost women of the aristocracy, the cream of society, would not, however, yield. An Emma Hart could never break certain barriers (except at Naples with a Duchess of

Argyle!) so easily. Time was required, many little concessions, little advances—and it must not, in the meantime, be forgotten that only in appearance, not in reality, had certain barriers been passed. And then, there was Queen Charlotte, sounded by the King himself, by the Prince of Wales, who was quickly drawn to Emma's cause—Queen Charlotte who would have nothing to do with her.

However, Sir William Hamilton did not for an instant lose his appearance of good temper, his courtly grace and carefree ways.

Emma came and went, hither and yon, in a world of milliners, art-leaders, young nobles, tenors, women of lesser standing, diplomats, and barristers. She smiled, she captivated. She was not worried. She even met Greville, as a friend, and exchanged with him aside, from time to time, between smiles, some allusion to the past, some Sybilline phrase. . . . She met Lord Featherstonehaugh and amazed him by her elegant manners and the inexhaustible youth of her. He made no allusion to the past. She had forgotten it.

The Marquess of Abercorn gave a soirée: "to meet Mrs. Hart". She went there adorned with two thousand five hundred pounds worth of diamonds, which Hamilton had given her before leaving Naples. She went to sing and mimic before some people of the nobility. Her

success was astounding. Several days later the same fête was given at the Marquess of Queensberry's. Horace Walpole happened to be there: "She sings marvellously," wrote the skeptic, "possesses a beautiful and strong voice, excells in Italian Opera and shows herself to be a surprising tragedienne. She sings Nina with the highest degree of perfection and in that piece her acting runs the most varied gamut of grace and expression. . . ."

The following week, when the future Ambassadress appeared in her box at Drury Lane, the spectators stood up and applauded at the radiance of her beauty—Drury Lane, where she had first seen the inside of a theatre!

The marriage was celebrated on the 6th of September, 1791, with the strictest privacy, in Marylebone Chapel. The day and the hour had been kept secret. But how cast a veil over such an event, when its principal is the centre of an entire capital's attention!

Before the altar Emma's bearing was maidenly. One could read in her eyes the modest joy of the youthful bride who is being united to the man of her choice. Sir William was more elegantly self-effaced than ever, with that pastel appearance and quiet and sombre expression. He hid his emotion under a faintly skeptical smile. Emma was a more earthly flower. But what inimitable grace, what wonders of sophis-

ticated coquetry! It was an incomparable picture, which told of all the past and foreshadowed the future!

Sir William's best friend, the Marquess of Abercorn, was witness, with Mr. Dutens, the Ambassador's secretary at Turin. During a hasty luncheon to which the witnesses were invited after the ceremony, Emma again became the joyous, giddy girl that she was. She seemed no longer to care that London had its eyes fixed upon her, nor to consider the rank which she would henceforth occupy. Her mother, who was present at the "breakfast," was still red about the eyes from weeping. Emma teased Sir William; she made fun of the Marquess, she scratched at certain lofty ladies she had noticed at recent soirées where she had been singing, and even took off the Reverend Edward Barry who had just blessed her union.

To avoid the curiosity of the people, the departure for Naples was set for the morrow. Emma bade adieu to the three who sat at table, in order to go and spend a last hour with her dear old friend Romney, who expected her.

When she appeared at the studio in Cavendish Square, her face still animated with the gaiety she had displayed during the repast, and by the emotion evoked by these first exciting hours of the day, she flung her arms about the neck of her great friend, the collaborator in

her glory, the imperishable narrator of her charms and of her imitative art of borrowing the expressions of sentiments which she did not at all experience. The twenty canvases undertaken during the several months of her stay filled the studio. Today, however, he did not want to finish any of them.

He blocked out a last one which he entitled: The Ambassadress.

Lady Hamilton's sole desire, on her return to Naples, was to be received by the Queen. Events aided her. The couple stopped at Paris in the great turmoil of the Revolution. The Ambassador and the new Ambassadress requested an audience with the near-prisoners of the Constituent Assembly, the King and Queen of France. Before Lady Hamilton, the eyes of Marie Antoinette were filled with tears. During the short interview she showed a lively interest in her whom the Queen of England had not consented to receive. . . . At the Tuileries, before these rulers already condemned, Emma's behavior offered to the uneasy eyes of Hamilton even more satisfaction than he could have desired. She was worthy of him; unaffected, observing the reserve imposed upon her with tact that touched him, but showing by the expression of her eyes, by her gestures, an emotion which would cause the spectators

at the performances of attitudes in the Palace of Sessa to shed tears. . . . Queen Marie Antoinette gave the Ambassadress a letter to her sister Maria Caroline. In the silence of this court, reduced in circumstances and a prey to fear, the visit of Lady Hamilton brightened the fair prisoner.

"Are you content with me?" asked Emma when they were in the coach, which passed out from the Tuileries under the scrutiny of the soldiers.

She arrived at Naples, armed with a letter from the Queen of France to the Queen of the Two Sicilies.

The entire city talked of Mrs. Hart's return. They knew that the new Ambassadress would shortly be received. But they did not know of the letter Marie Antoinette had given her nor of the eagerness of the Queen of Naples to learn its contents.

When it was a matter of her own immediate satisfaction, Maria Caroline set custom aside: she appointed the audience for the next day, before the Council, which was held at eleven in the morning.

Emma wore a simple gown without ornaments. But then there were her eyes and her lips. And the art of her personality . . . the attitudes. . . . An anxious sister, a diplomatic Queen, a stateswoman, Maria Caroline awaited

the letter. . . . But she desired ardently, also, to look upon this woman whose name had so often come to her ears, and whom Ferdinand himself, who loved scarcely anyone but girls of the common people, had been smitten with for a time!

Emma was taken into a little, tiled antechamber. She saw through the window the Bay of a November day, grey and silver towards Torre del Greco and Terra Annunziata, with their coral colored houses. At first, Emma had been only an adventuress in love, a seeker after pleasure. But her association with aristocrats, with diplomats and women of the world had taught her the necessity of making a place for herself, of loving money and taking honors into consideration.

A private secretary came to conduct the Ambassadress.

From a distance the Queen appeared rather majestic, but near at hand she was prettier, though somewhat faded.

The daughter of Maria Theresa and the daughter of the blacksmith of Hawarden; the woman who governed a people, ambitious as a great Queen, and she whom her beauty rendered also a Queen, exchanged smiles. But, already, Emma had made a deep reverence as she had at the feet of Marie Antoinette. Maria Caroline observed her with the quasi-profes-

sional habit which rulers never lose of estimating those who kneel before them according to the perfection of a first obeisance.

Under that naturally chill regard, Emma arose. The Queen found her, also, prettier than at a distance. Emma made a step forward. She had just marked the resemblance to the Queen of France in the face of her sister. . . .

As she stood unmoving, the Queen, who had advanced, indicated a seat. . . . Emma bent forward. She had remarked the perfection of the Queen's arms and, taking her fingers, kissed them. Then she held forth the letter. Maria Caroline took it but did not read it. Still on her hand lingered the sensation of that sudden kiss.

"You had a pleasant journey?" she asked in French. Maria Caroline had the accent of *l'Est.* Lady Hamilton at first experienced a little difficulty in finding words. In the silence her voice carried to her hearer inflections which were avowals of her emotion. Maria Caroline with pleasure saw perform for her alone this glorious creature who, Acton had told her, was only a prostitute, but who had fascinated the Court. She was being treated to a display of attitudes, though Emma was quite unconscious of the fact. She let herself be captivated, in her turn, and forgot the letter of Marie Antoinette, the letter in German, the despair-

ing letter from the prisoner of her revolted subjects. Messengers came to announce the meeting of the Council; the Queen sent them away with an indifferent wave of her hand. Lady Hamilton stood modestly, her lids lowered so as not to show the gleam of pleasure in her eyes. She left to the Queen the task of choosing, of fixing the day of her presentation at Court. . . . She entrusted to the Queen, in so far as it was possible, in her life thus far unmarked by any great purpose, the happiness of her future career.

Lady Hamilton was not like the women of the Court. She had about her an indefinable allure. The former courtesan spoke of a world unknown to this Queen, married at fourteen years, who had reigned for almost a quarter of a century. To this daughter of Maria Theresa, who had borne a litany of children and lived like a statesman, the map of Europe before her eyes, Emma was an island, distant and perfumed, whose fragrance one knew before attaining it, like the Bahamas, in the torrid waters of the Antilles, where the scent of lilies intoxicates the sailor long before he has reached the shore.

When she returned to the Palace of Sessa, Emma told Sir William about the interview. He was delighted. That very evening, those

who awaited the presentation, learned that it had already taken place . . . with vast success! . . . in the greatest privacy.

To the first soirée given at the Royal Palace the Hamiltons were invited. Henceforth there would be no assemblies to which she whom Horace Walpole called in one of his later letters, "Madame the Envoy of Naples," would not be asked. The King, the Princes, swore by Emma alone. She electrified the atmosphere, always stiff, bored, unsettled and chill, of Court Receptions—even private ones. She brightened up the slightly strained relations of the Royal Family. She flirted gaily with Ferdinand; she cast a spell, doubtless less ingenuously than it appeared, upon the Queen. The former maid of The Abbess was intoxicated with the growing friendship of the daughter of Maria Theresa.

However, in the course of the first intimate luncheon which she attended at the palace, the Ambassadress fell into sudden and total distraction. She forgot Ferdinand, her left hand neighbor, and ceased to perceive on the other side of the table the Queen, the Princes, and Princesses. She saw herself again in London in company with another girl, Jane Powell, who was sixteen years old like herself, and who was chambermaid at Dr. Budd's where she herself looked after the children. They

were costumed, even then, as street-singers, in order to go to the promenade of Corkshearth Camp. After singing timidly they were accosted by two young men, who had noticed their beauty. The girls were still innocent; they began to fear their prank was going to let them in for some unpleasantness. The gallantries of the two young fops who insisted on putting their arms about them, forced them to run. From Corkshearth to London it was a breathless chase. Reaching the bridge the giddy youngsters hurried down a flight of steps which led to the Thames, jumped into a boat, loosed the painter and began to row, whilst their pursuers shouted after them in vain from the shore. . . . Jane Powell had become a famous actress. On her recent visit to England Emma had gone to see her play. . . .

"What are you thinking of, my dear lady?" asked the Queen.

When she was honored by being received into the friendship of the rulers, Emma's caustic wit, her mimicking of certain personages at Court, amused Big Nose and had on the Queen an effect akin to that of champagne.

"Encore!" cried the Princes.

The entertainments of singing and attitudes followed each other.

Emma sang a duet with the King, who afterwards fished for compliments.

"Sire, you sing . . . like . . . like a king," she told him.

The attitudes were offered in particular to the Queen. For her Emma elected to dance a tarantelle, with a sort of rhythmic movement, gracefully balanced, which she speeded up by shaking a tambourine. When the weather was favorable she performed this popular dance of the Neapolitans in the evening before the Bay, within a peristyle, by the light of candles and the moon rays.

Maria Caroline wrote the next day to thank Emma for the pleasure she had given her. Towards noon, after the Council, she again scribbled a few words to ask Emma to come before the end of the day. Often in the evening, after leaving Emma, she would write her for the third time.

The vanity which Emma had in her heart favored this exclusive intimacy of these two creatures born at the most widely separated points of the social hierarchy.

Not only did Lady Hamilton organize dinners and festivities at the Palace; it seemed even that the news from outside could not come except through her. She knew how to mix the gossip of the day with interesting diplomatic indiscretions; she amused and in-

structed, she was a walking news-sheet. Just now, she would be among those moving to their summer residences at Caserta. Maria Caroline consulted Emma about her dresses; she lent her horses from the royal stables, "with her personal, liveried servants." Everyone knows the importance of the Royal livery in a Court! Emma added in a letter to Greville that if she were her daughter the Queen could not be more kind to her. "No person can be so charming as the Queen. She is everything one can wish—the best mother, wife, and friend in the world."

But she was afraid to appear exaggerated; she added, as if to dissipate any wrong supposition that might spring from a so sudden and total favor; "My dear Sir William is as fond of me as ever, and I am, as women generally are, ten thousand times fonder of him than I was. . . ."

And she added these sorrowful lines, after an account of her life at Court: "Do send me a plan, how I could situate little Emma, poor thing; for I wish it."

Events, tragic for rulers and sorrowful for their people, had burst upon Europe. Those fanatics who scoffed at and destroyed Royalty Maria Caroline held in abhorrence. She hated France—that is to say, the Revolution. Lady Hamilton was scarcely attracted by politics,

but she was obliged to hear a great deal said about European affairs in the circle where she moved. She shared, then, the horror of her most adored Queen. It was at first only as a consequence of her friendship for the Queen and of her being the wife of a plenipotentiary, that Emma made an effort to appear interested in the anti-Royalist plots of the French Admiral Latouche, whose fleet was lying at Naples. Maria Caroline wished to be rid of the Admiral, who was distributing tricolored cockades and encouraging the Neapolitan *patriots* to organize secret societies. When the Admiral did go away, the Queen imprisoned the *patriots*. This move amused Lady Hamilton. To her it seemed quite in keeping with the haughty and hectic life of rulers. Some occurrences drew from Maria Caroline expressions of noble fury which delighted the artist in Emma. And then, these events to which Acton, the first minister, the old lover, reacted so little and which left Ferdinand IV undisturbed in his indolence, seemed to bring the Queen closer to her favorite. When she had to act the part of the great diplomat, of the cautious leader, Maria Caroline, who often experienced a dizziness of the head, returned with greater relief, with more delight, to the company of this ravishing creature who rested her after her fatigues, after her over-

work, and whom it pleased her to look upon and caress like a beautiful pet animal, a plaything in every way worthy of her.

One evening in February, 1793, Lady Hamilton prepared to go, wearing a domino, to a carnival fête. The desire to forget politics, the craving for pleasure which still burned at times in the former goddess of Dr. Graham, the charming bit of fluff who had made her début in the riding-parties in the avenues of Up Park . . . the fever of living which consumed the refugees and the dilettanti from all countries, assembled at Naples, created around the Bacchante an atmosphere pleasing to her passions that success had not made blasé. Clad in the ample Venetian domino, Emma could not resist the caprice to twine once again bunches of golden grapes in the coils of her hair. If her face was less firm than at the close of adolescence, it still had kept its adorable freshness. Emma's eyes grew soft. She found herself beautiful. She was just thirty years old. With the grapes floating about her ears, she thought of Thomas Lawrence, of Madame Vigée-Lebrun, of Romney, of all her pictures. . . .

There was a knock at the door. Emma, who held in her hand a rabbit's paw rubbed with rouge, half turned, bidding whoever it was

to enter. She regretted losing this moment of solitude in which she was so beautiful . . . for herself alone.

It was a message from the King. Farewell to the carnival, Bacchante! Louis XVI had been guillotined on the 21st of January. The news had just come from Paris, eighteen days late! Before her dressing table Emma read the letter.

After sending Sir William the news, she snatched the golden grapes from her hair. In the rose tinted city, which awoke to pleasure with the night, lights were extinguished and shouts died down, as if all were covered again by the ashes of Vesuvius. The Ambassador entered. Emma had caused black veils to be brought to her . . . the same which she had used for her attitudes. She arose; she held out the letter of Maria Caroline. The candle light accentuated the beauty of her flesh in its dark draperies.

Husband and wife stared at each other without saying a word. She read what was required of her in Hamilton's expression, and hastened to the Royal Palace.

Emma, sent to Naples by Greville to become, unknown to her, the mistress of Hamilton and to encourage the uncle's generosity towards his nephew, became, once again un-

known to her, the diplomatic agent of England at the Court of Naples. The subtle Hamilton seemed to be ahead of his time. He stripped Pompeii for a collection which he never displayed and scarcely ever looked at, and which was destined only for England . . . where the pottery trade secured, for purposes of reproduction, the forms and decorations of the antique vases. . . . Hamilton's flexibility, perhaps his patriotism, caused him to shut his eyes on whatever scandal his wife's almost extravagant intimacy with the Queen might cause. He could not desire Emma now, as he had when she was his nephew's mistress, ten years ago. Moreover, he was advised of all kinds of secrets through her . . . secrets that, as a good Ambassador, he hastened to make known to his Government. He was Acton's friend and the favorite hunting companion of Ferdinand IV. He would not, however, learn from them in an entire year what his wife could tell him after an hour's conversation with the Queen. In every way Emma directly served the policy of the two countries . . . she who abhorred politics and found them wearisome.

On the occasion of the birth of their grandson, the Archduke of Austria, the rulers of the Two Sicilies interrupted Court Mourning in the month of May for a sort of festival, rather a family-affair, at Caserta, where they

had been staying for several months. Emma took charge of everything, and organized the soirée. She never left the Queen, who could not bear to have the Ambassadress away from her for an instant. In the evening they frequently spent two or three hours *tête-à-tête* (in French in a letter of Emma to Greville). At noon Emma had to be ready for luncheon, "for the royal family lunches early". The Ambassador's villa had become the social centre of Caserta, because of the fact that the Bourbons were in mourning. Lady Hamilton entertained there the Duchess of Devonshire and her family; likewise the Duchess of Ancaster. "A family of fifty people," stayed with her for four days.

When mourning for Louis XVI was at an end, the Ambassadress was often seen at the theatre or on the promenade with the Queen, who thought perhaps thus to give to her people an assurance of her alliance with England —while in reality the scandal-mongers sought other motives for their close friendship.

This rôle, which had once flattered Emma, now wearied her. She regretted the time when her days were at her own disposal and not mapped out for her. Whatever of snobbery she had acquired she now found cloying. Like Madame de Maintenon, following with her

eyes the royal carp, she mourned her lowly past.

One September evening, when the Queen invited her to dinner, Emma sent a letter of excuse to the Royal Palace, saying she was ill, that she had fever. The crater of the volcano puffed out its lurid smoke. The breath of the sea was freighted with the scent of ripe grapes. The winds, still scorching, blew above Portici, where high coco trees waved their dark palms. The stonework of houses exposed to the sunset was still warm. Emma went for a walk along the quays of Chiara, accompanied by her maid, veiled like herself. She wanted to go and see danced the tarantelle, as she loved to dance it herself, with all the fire of the Arab-eyed people. And she told herself, walking through the riffraff, who ate their fish on the doorsteps of the hovels of Santa Lucia, among dirty children who smeared their faces with grape juice, amongst crushed tomatoes and decayed fruit—she told herself that she could be dining this evening with the daughter of the Empress Maria Theresa, today the mother of an Empress, sister of the Queen of France and of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, sister-in-law of the King of Spain: Queen Maria Caroline of Naples and of the Two Sicilies . . . and it was she—Emma Lyon—of her own free will, for her own good pleasure, without any

pretence—for the mere satisfaction of hearing the rabble sing and of watching the dance of some dishevelled *ragazza* (brazen-girl), of wandering amongst those to whom she belonged, who lived still their miserable existence, that she, a runaway, a deserter, had consigned this Queen to the devil for an hour, a little hour, to be spent voluptuously amongst the offscourings of the earth. . . . at last!

V

THE following day, September 10th, 1793, Emma slept late. She had returned to the Palace of Sessa, a little weary from walking the pavements of Naples, in the evening when the African sirocco seemed heavy with scents absorbed in gliding over Sorrento, after crossing the sea. The chambermaid awakened Emma from her dreams. With her hair loose, her bosom peeping from her night-gown, her arms naked in the faint light from the rapidly drawn curtain, she was the most shining allegory of Morning that a painter could depict. Propped amongst her pillows she asked what was afoot.

The woman told her that a fleet had arrived in the Bay . . . an English fleet. Emma saw again the fugitive image of John Willet Payne pass before her, a captain of the fleet before becoming admiral; with whom she still had some slight, very infrequent correspondence —correspondence of friendship, most respectful on the part of him who was, just the same, the father of "That poor little Emma". . .

The English fleet! Lady Hamilton's eyes at

this instant would have filled Romney with enthusiasm!

"Tell the Ambassador to come quick, quick!" Emma sank back amongst the pillows.

Sir William entered. His temples appeared always a little less wrinkled in the morning. He told her about the fleet. He prayed Emma to be ready to receive the visit of the officers. It was only another official duty but it offered more diversion than listening to the woes of attachés who wished to become secretaries. She got out of bed and donned a flowing robe. She flung her arms about her husband's neck. He was not unduly provoked at her refusing the Queen's invitation of the previous evening, was he? . . . What had they talked about at dinner? . . . What had they done afterwards? . . . The Ambassador was in a hurry. . . . Milady busied herself with her toilet. The noise of the city grew louder. One heard salvos being fired. Each explosion brought a flurry of excitement to her adventurous heart which perhaps had been somewhat benumbed of late.

Soon the Ambassadress was ready. She went to give her orders. Mrs. Cadogan flitted up and down the stairs.

Before noon, the Ambassador was announced. He said, with his studied boredom and his native smoothness:—"The captain whom you will receive is a very small man and

by no means handsome. . . . But if he lives he will become someone. Put him in the room reserved for Prince Augustus."

Emma entrusted the preparation of this room to Mrs. Cadogan and went down into the Ambassador's study. She found the captain there. He was deep chested: his face was angular, energetic, of the type called hard, but his expression suggested an unusual power of will.

"Captain Nelson," said the Ambassador, presenting the sailor.

Emma did the honors with a quiet grace that awed this man sprung from small beginnings, this ambitious son of a Norfolk clergyman, who feared that he would never acquire the social ease he lacked and which, it seemed to him, Emma possessed in the highest degree.

Nelson had not expected to meet such a charming mistress of the house. He was confused, abashed; he did not notice how beautiful and desirable she was until he had succumbed to her grace and the exquisiteness of her manners. At table she questioned him about his voyages. They were united in their hatred for France. At the close of the meal a message came from the Queen. Maria Caroline wished to have news of her dear lady, spoke of her regrets at not having seen her at dinner the previous evening, then com-

mented upon the arrival of the fleet, which was going to recruit men to defend against the Convention the city of Toulon, whose gates had been thrown open to the English by the partisans of Louis XVIII. Emma carelessly gave the gist of the letter to the Ambassador, in front of the Captain. She had the writing-case brought; she scrawled a few lines, all studded with capitals, announcing to the Queen that she would visit her that very afternoon.

The ambitious Nelson said to himself, doubtless, that the bourgeois and timid Mrs. Nelson, who was living in England, in seclusion, was a much less necessary and useful ally than this woman might be to him—she from whom he could not tear away his glance whilst she was writing. He had just spent several weeks on shipboard. He was young, thirty-five. The Neapolitans had welcomed him with a quick and delirious explosion of joy. Just a short while before, when it was learned that the commander of the Fleet was lunching at the Palace of Sessa, there gathered in the neighborhood an enthusiastic concourse. Its noise, its shouts drifted into the court-yard and through the walls of the house. Nelson would have to show himself at the window. . . .

The morrow was a gala day at the San Carlo. From every box, glances were directed toward

the hero of the festivities. The Neapolitan aristocracy, humming like a hive of bees, rejoiced at the occasion thus offered to demonstrate against Revolutionary France in favor of England. Amongst these bejewelled, corseted and powdered women there were those like the Marquesa Sammarco, once intimate with the Queen, who were jealous of Emma and hated her. . . . But, brilliant English people now won over to her cause—the Ladies Plymouth, Malmesbury, Carnegie, Wright, Malden and others—were they not there? Emma, as Ambassadress, shared the success of the evening with the captain of the British squadron. They found themselves drawn to each other by the admiration of the spectators. Who could tell the influence of such a draught of fame, shared in common, upon the future of these two beings, when one took into account the depths of theatrical character inherent in Lady Hamilton.

Assisted by Emma, Nelson prepared for the day of his departure a farewell celebration on the *Agamemnon*. Unfortunately, at dawn the captain received a warning that the French ships had been seen off the coast of Sardinia. Like a true warrior, he put off the Court, the Embassy and its circle. . . . The sails soon bellied out from the masts of the English squadron. Horatio Nelson, who had obtained

his ten thousand men for the siege of Toulon, carried away with him in his heart the shining image of Emma.

Several weeks later, Naples learned, almost at the same time, the news that Queen Marie Antoinette had died on the scaffold and that the city of Toulon had just been lost by the English, due to the genius and fearlessness of a little officer so obscure that even Maria Caroline could not have mentioned his name to her favorite, but whom, by reason of information in his secret reports, Sir William Hamilton would never forget: Lieutenant Bonaparte.

The new occasion for mourning, the brutal tragedy which put Maria Caroline's sensibilities to the test, the loss of Toulon, where the ten thousand Neapolitans and Sicilians had shown their valor, but had shared the defeat of the English, drove hatred deeper than ever into the heart of the Queen . . . a restless hatred. She saw her throne threatened. Acton was only a tool in her hands. The image of her sister, victim of the guillotine, haunted her. This despot, ruling at her own good pleasure and with absolute control, who sensed everywhere machinations against her, felt her royal power slipping into the abyss. In her dreams a bloody head wandered over misty steppes. And, alone, the intimacy of her "dear lady" afforded an hour of repose, some mo-

ments of forgetfulness to this daughter of Maria Theresa, who had mothered eighteen children and who had reigned for more than a quarter of a century.

Emma, who loved only pleasure, pictures, music, singing, soirées, fêtes, dinners where the jewels of the women vied with the luxury of the table . . . Emma, deprived of singing and galas, was a sort of recluse. She had no longer leisure to practise her attitudes, except for herself, before her mirror; sometimes, perhaps, for the Queen or for Hamilton. She heard nothing but politics. She lived in the midst of misgivings and apprehensions born of numerous plots, fostered by the harshness of Maria Caroline, and nourished by the terror of the Republic.

Three young men, the eldest only twenty-two years old, were beheaded in the public-square. The Queen made enemies not only of the lukewarm Republicans, whom she could have kept, but even of the active and disinterested part of the nobility. The imprisonment of the Cavaliere Medici, entrusted with the work of arresting the conspirators, served to isolate the Court by involving it in new arrests always more arbitrary.

By this time the soldiers of the French Republic had defeated the foreign armies sent

against them. In the southeast they had taken Nice, after crossing the Var. Unknown to Maria Caroline, Ferdinand wished to resume relations with France. But the Queen, who never left Lady Hamilton, blinded by her hatred of those who had shaken the peace of Europe, the assassins of her sister and brother-in-law—the Queen looked to England alone for aid. The letters of Maria Caroline to lovely Emma spoke of nothing but diplomatic relations—to this beautiful creature, who wrote at the time to Greville to send her an English hat, very elegant, to wear horse-back riding, and who said to him a day later, when asking for muslin of the first quality, that the two hundred pounds which Sir William gave her for her toilet were insufficient. ("You know how far 2 hundred will go!")

The diplomatic activity of the most lovely Emma was revealed in a letter to Greville in which she explained her silence. "We have not time to write to you, as we have been 3 days and nights, writing to send by this courrier letters of *consequence* for our government. They ought to be gratefull to Sir William and myself in particular, as my situation at this Court is very *extraordinary,* and what no person (h) as yet arrived at, but one (h) as no thanks, and I am allmost sick of grandeur."

From these letters, written during three

nights, from these documents furnished by Maria Caroline to Lady Hamilton, resulted a disaster for Spain: the capture of all her vessels which happened to be in English waters.

The Kingdom of Naples seemed condemned. Its isolation was almost complete. England alone could lend assistance in the reckless struggle into which Maria Caroline had blindly thrown herself. It was at this time that Bonaparte set out for a destination unknown, from the port of Toulon, which he had taken from the English. But in sight of Sardinia a tempest battered the French fleet. One of his ships, which had become separated, was captured by Nelson who then learned by forcing the crew to talk that Egypt was the object of the expedition. Instantly he crowded sail for Naples.

When the coming of a squadron was announced, the Court did not know whether it was the accursed French, or the English it had so long awaited. Towards the end of the day in June all doubt was removed. Emma was with the Queen; Hamilton and Acton had spent part of the night together. The following morning, at the first hour, whilst the rulers still slept in the Royal Palace, a messenger from Nelson, Captain Troubridge, knocked at the door of the Embassy. Emma, who had slept little, arose and went down into her husband's study.

An agreement, of October 1796, signed between Ferdinand and France, fixed at two only, the number of English ships which might enter at once any port of the Two Sicilies. Now, Nelson needed to revictual promptly if he wished to hasten towards Egypt in pursuit of Bonaparte. The Queen, indeed, only welcomed the chance to override the agreement signed by the King, but Ferdinand wanted to stay on good terms with the Directory; especially since the success of the French in Northern Italy. Lady Hamilton had her horses hitched to the carriage and drove to the palace; she went into the royal apartments and even into the room of Maria Caroline whom she awakened by kissing her hand; kneeling beside the bed, she explained to the Queen the urgency of the communication brought by Troubridge.

This surpassing actress knew what words should be uttered and what tears shed to bring about the desired result. Moreover, was she not pleading with one who wanted only to let herself be convinced? Nelson should receive the favor that he asked. Lady Hamilton brought the writing-case to the bed. The Queen wrote several lines and handed them to Emma. She read the paper; she pressed the blue-veined hands and hastened to the door, blowing a kiss from her finger-tips. . . .

In the meantime, Sir William had gone to find Acton. When his wife appeared he was leaving the Prime Minister with only vague promises from Acton. Emma tendered her document. Her eyes sparkled, her lips glistened. Troubridge cast his eyes upon the royal order: "We enjoin the governors of all the ports of Sicily to receive the English fleet with hospitality, to supply it with water and provisions and in every way to assist it."

And it was dated June 17th, 1798, and signed. . . .

"You have just won a victory, milady," cried Troubridge, "a victory which will fill the Admiral with ecstasy!"

The Ambassador, his wife and Troubridge returned to the Embassy. In the carriage Emma asked about Nelson and about the injury which had deprived him of an arm before Teneriffe. Back in his office the Ambassador took a sheet of paper and wrote these words:

"You will receive from Emma the order, which will do your work well and will procure for you all you need."

Emma scrawled a note also at a neighboring table: "I write you in haste. God keep you, and send you a victory! Let me see you bring Bonaparte back with you! The Queen charges me to say that she wishes you the victory with

all her heart and soul. I cannot express how glad I'll be to see you again. Forever, forever, dear sir. Your affectionate and grateful, Emma Hamilton."

Nelson replied:

"My dear Lady Hamilton: I have kissed the Queen's letter. Pray say, I hope for the honour of kissing her hand, when no fears will intervene. Assure her Majesty that no person has her felicity more at heart than myself.

Ever your faithful,

Horatio Nelson."

On the back of the yellow sheet which ended with this prophecy of eternal faithfulness, the quaint writing of Emma had traced these words: "Without the Queen's order, our fleet would have been obliged to return to Gibraltar to revictual and the Battle of the Nile could not have taken place, for the French had time to regain Toulon . . . !"

Horatio Nelson sailed away in the bosom of his fleet, without having set foot ashore.

At Naples, events moved fast. The isolation of the Court increased. Mistakes begot mistakes. Maria Caroline became each day less inclined to listen to reason. Emma, alone, still had power to reason with her and calm her.

The victory of the Nile, as Emma expressed it, was Aboukir; the annihilation of the French Fleet a few miles from Alexandria, the 1st of

August, 1798. Ten days later, Nelson, wounded in the forehead during the battle, and who had just suffered the removal of an eye . . . he who had had his right arm amputated a year ago, after Teneriffe . . . Nelson wrote to Emma: "I shall be able now to show you the remains of Horatio Nelson. I hope the injuries he has suffered, will not prevent him from being well received by you. These are honorable scars. I ask permission to present Captain Capel who returns, bearing my dispatches, for your benefit."

Emma replied in that style which paints so perfectly the romantic character of this younger sister of Lord Byron:

"How shall I begin? What shall I say to you? It is impossible for me to write, for I am delirious with joy and, since Monday, I have had a fever which agitation and happiness brought about.

"Oh God, what a victory! I swooned when I learned this joyous news. . . . Never, never in all time, was there an event so glorious, nor so decisive! I would have thought it a happiness to have died in that moment. . . . But, no, I do not wish to die at all before having seen again and embraced the Hero of the Nile. . . .

"How describe to you the transports of Maria Caroline? She swooned and embraced her husband, her children, ran about the room,

cried and held in her arms successively everyone in her entourage. Maria Caroline is dressed alla Nelson. Her ear-rings are anchors and on her buttons is engraved her seal: The Nile and Nelson. She and her husband are completely en-Nelsoned! In her impetuous joy the Queen cries out before her agitated children . . . and her stupid husband himself runs about frantically calling down on their liberator the blessings of all these anguished hearts."

Who would not believe he had lived this tragic scene, where Emma permits us to observe with the naked eye the rulers in their privacy!

Naples prepared a triumphal reception for the conqueror. The city was illuminated from the evening before his expected arrival. From the façade of the Embassy shone a Maltese Cross, with the two letters H. N. . . . which some, the uninitiated, took for the initials of Hamilton and Nelson; while the H really stood for the Admiral's first name: Horatio.

Whilst Naples was flamboyant with its streamers, Emma went to rejoin the Queen in her apartment. The two women watched from the window the dancing rose lights of the illuminations against the intense blue of the August night. For the first time in long months the Queen did not seem haunted by forebodings. In a city en fête, the heart of

rulers is light. The reflections of the lights shone upon Emma's face. She wore an expression of mystery and peace that added a fitting touch to the emotional force of that hour. However, her usual obsessions assailed the Queen anew: "Lombardy rejects the French yoke. . . . Tuscany and the Papal States are only awaiting the chance to revolt." Without awaiting the aid of Austria, Maria Caroline expressed her willingness, "to make war on the Directory, now deprived of Bonaparte, abandoned with his army in the sands of the desert." . . . . Naples must cross the Frontier, march upon Rome where Championnet was. . . . Recapture Malta. . . . The Queen, enumerated her plans with her usual vivacity, with pretty gestures of her aristocratic hands. Suddenly she knew that Emma no longer listened. . . . She looked at her dear lady and became silent. She put out her hand towards the arm of the Ambassadress, which hung down by her side. . . . But Emma remained unheeding:

"What is my dear lady thinking of?"

Where already had Emma heard that question on the lips of the Queen? The first time she had breakfasted at the palace after her marriage. Of what was she dreaming then? She no longer remembered. Of her lowly past! Today it was of the meeting with Nelson that she was dreaming, during the maunderings of

Maria Caroline. She pictured the clear and chill glance of the one-eyed man, in the Prussian blue of the night, his thin face that she had not seen for five years, since the first visit of the hero who had sailed away on the *Agamemnon,* without saying farewell, on the very morning of the day on which he was to entertain the rulers at breakfast.

"What is my dear lady thinking of?"

Outside, they could hear the noise of the city which vibrated with a single heart, a Neapolitan heart, for the conqueror awaited at the close of battle. Faithful to Sir William since her arrival in Naples, Emma told herself she must captivate this sailor. Hamilton had reached his seventieth year. He was still vigorous, but he was nearing the end of his career! And if he should happen to pass away. . . .

"Emma?" questioned Maria Caroline for the third time.

"Has the Queen spoken?" demanded the Ambassadress with a start, in her languid voice. In the night she tried to distinguish the phantom forerunner of the *Vanguard,* in which she pictured the one-eyed man, his clear gaze directed towards illuminated Naples . . . Naples which from afar acclaimed him . . . new and transient master of the world.

The next day, towards noon, the victorious fleet cast anchor before the city. Emma had gone to see Maria Caroline, before the meeting of the Council. Then she returned to the Palace of Sessa to dress; for she by no means wished to show the Queen what she was going to wear when she went to greet the hero aboard the *Vanguard,* in company with the King. The impressionable Maria Caroline was too tired to go. Perhaps, of a sudden, the victory won, the daughter of Maria Theresa, who fifteen days ago had in the intimacy of her family showed herself so demonstrative under the implacable eyes of Emma, found it better after all, since it was she who had brought about the victory by authorizing Nelson to revictual his fleet in the Sicilian ports, to await the Admiral at her palace.

Whatever may be the extent and spontaneity of their recognition, princes have always instinctively acted so that those who come to them in the rôle of victors should be stripped on the threshold of their palace of an excess of laurel leaves too verdant.

Towards half-past two the carriage which would take the Ambassador and Ambassadress to the landing-stage, was in the court-yard. Emma had roses put in it; but she was not ready. There would be eighty people to dinner at the Embassy, day after tomorrow, and sev-

enteen hundred invitations would be issued for the ball. But if she was not entirely ready it was chiefly because she had changed her hat at the last minute. The other was becoming but it was too big; "I don't wish to die before I have embraced the hero of the Nile!" . . . Sir William was in the vestibule conversing with the first secretary and a young attaché, who took notes in his memo book. Hamilton kept his *sangfroid* before the eyes of the servants, but his lips were compressed and his heel, despite him, tapped the flagstones. Emma came at last. She had donned a little blue hat, the color of her eyes, the color of the Nile and of the sea. . . . A little blue hat very much like that which Greville had asked her to wear and almost fitted upon her head for her arrival in Naples! A long rose-colored scarf was draped from her shoulders and floated over her right arm; her hand rested upon a long cane.

The equipage was splendid, the horses pranced, the servants wore red livery with broad galloons in the colors of Great Britain. A light breeze had ruffled the sea since morning. Pleasure was in the air.

Ferdinand arrived at the landing stage a few seconds after the Ambassador and Ambassadress had set foot there. Emma made a reverence, her roses in her arms, her hand on her cane. Banners waved in the breeze.

The Island of Capri was almost invisible in the blue of the sea where it met the sky. On the quays the crowd acclaimed the King, the English, the ministers and all the important and scarcely known personnel of the Court.

To cross the gang-way which led to the Royal barge, Ferdinand IV offered his hand to Lady Hamilton. Around them, deep-red colored pennants and white oriflammes decorated with fleurs-de-lys and with an encompassing crown, waved. Emma's agitation seemed to grow in proportion as the bannered barge moved away from the bank. Salvos were discharged from the Fort of St. Elmo and from the English vessels. And the long oars, a thousand pairs, which seemed like the feathers of a wing, rose and fell as if moved by heart-beats.

The Admiral's ship approached. Soon the golden barge came alongside the *Vanguard*. A man, livid, his breast adorned with stars, stood at the break of the rail. The King made Lady Hamilton, bearing her armful of roses, go in front of him. The Ambassadress wished to climb the steps more rapidly than a woman's heart would permit. She bowed, exhausted, pale herself, before the mutilated hero . . . half-fainting, offering him her flowers. Nelson gathered her in his single arm. The cane rolled upon the bridge. The officers who stood in a

wide circle hastened forward. They brought a chair. The Victor of the Nile leaned over Emma who had just lost consciousness. . . . But his single eye soon saw open below it, in the shadow of the brave little blue hat, those glorious orbs which seemed like a gift of the sea.

Nelson's fleet remained a long time anchored in the Bay. The 24th of September, the Admiral gave a luncheon on board to celebrate the title which had just been created for him, Baron of the Nile. It was once more Emma who prepared the fête, and who was its most beautiful adornment. Glorious days for her. The most ardent of her life. She had not had to conquer. The hero had surrendered his weapons; he had confessed that, since their first meeting, the image of Lady Hamilton had never been effaced from his heart. He had lived the rough, adventurous life of a sailor, he had advanced towards coveted honors, guarding the secret remembrance of her radiant beauty, her incomparable grace, her elegance, such as he had never before encountered. These two adventurers of the sublime were worthy of each other. They played, even to the point of recklessness, the game which makes and breaks the careers of men.

When Nelson found himself again before her whose smile hid unwitting designs . . . a

sudden consuming passion possessed him. He had just ruined in Egypt the projects of Bonaparte, who had terrified Europe. He was an Admiral. He received the felicitations of all the confederated princes. The summer of the Bay of Naples had never been more enchanting. He was the friend of a Queen, the most queenly of her time. And he lived in the intimacy of a woman of whom for five years he had dreamed during the nights upon the sea, in the restless realm of the waves.

The favoring of circumstances, the hero's passion, tempted Lady Hamilton off the straight road she had followed since her arrival in Naples. The enthusiasm with which Nelson was welcomed, the acclamation which surrounded him, fevered her with the intoxication of success and conspired with the plans her mind had built, as if it had dreamed them. For her who had so loved life and honors; her who had never desired anything except to scale new heights and who had created for herself a place to which "no person 'as as yet arrived," the coming into her existence of a Nelson, amorous, amorous as a savage, as a sailor, as a hero . . . seemed providential.

Writing a *service dispatch* to the First Lord of the Admiralty, the Baron of the Nile penned these lines: "On the other side of the table Lady Hamilton is sitting and you will understand,

I hope, the glorious incoherence of my letter."

Maria Caroline, jealous, instantly suspected this love. Perhaps Emma played at first a double game, in letting her believe that she did not pay attention to this one-armed man to whom Ferdinand had given the title of "Liberator," except for the sake of the Court. She continued to go and see the Queen each morning before the Council; but she would meet Nelson immediately afterwards at the Embassy, on the second floor, in the round salon which had been her apartment and where she had given, since, her first displays of attitudes. Sir William almost always assisted at the Council with Acton. It was an hour of liberty for Emma. She changed her dress. The Admiral was announced. She told the servants to ask him if he would go up to the music room. They would not be disturbed there. Through the window one could see the intense blue of the ocean and the ships of the squadron with their sails furled, and the great animation of little boats which were bringing the merry people to storm the vessels. From the hexagonal salon, Neptune reigned over his empire, at the side of Venus. With this man, who had become so powerful and who loved her, Emma was another woman. She was chaste, she was reserved, although gay. She played the piano. she sang . . . the air of Nina. It was her song

of love! The admiral liked decorations. His breast was starred with them. He was carefully groomed for his visit. He was tightly uniformed. He was resplendent. His gold braid gave to his lifeless face, to his angular features, and his remaining eye, a strong relief. His right sleeve was folded back on his shoulder. If Emma had not known Nelson with his two arms and his two eyes, on his first voyage, perhaps she would not have so readily succumbed to the fascination of these glorious wounds. Famous adventuresses have a passion for soldiers, they love uniforms and even blood. Nelson took one of the hands which wandered over the keys. It was the hour when the heat began to be overwhelming, in spite of the breeze which came through the open windows of the salon. Emma let him take her hand, but she continued to sing. The sailor's lips covered with kisses the glowing delicate flesh of her hand. He straightened. He gazed upon her long, slender neck and followed the movements of her throat as she sang. Her voice was warm, still magnificent; more emotional since she studied less. Nelson kissed the nape of her neck below the thick copper-colored hair. Its fragrance heaped flame upon his desire. With his one free arm he crushed her breast to his. . . . her breast that medals, metallic clasps, stiff gold braid wounded . . .

wounds almost voluptuous, and glorious to her vanity. Her hands had ceased to rest upon the ivory keys but her magic voice, so softly pitched, still breathed its song.

In the distance one could hear a call, sounded on little copper bugles, in the vessels of the English squadron.

Towards half past twelve the Ambassador appeared; he seemed more worn, a little pale. He opened the door of the music room. Emma had begun to sing again for she had heard the sound of the horses' hoofs in the court.

"Doesn't Emma sing delightfully?" asked her husband.

Nelson . . . needed a rest. He had not taken sufficient care of himself after the removal of his eye on the day following Aboukir, and the welcome of the Neapolitans had played him out. Emma and Mrs. Cadogan carried him off to Castellammare. Emma had rented a villa wherein the hero escaped the convocations of Maria Caroline and let himself be nursed by the Divine Lady. She knew how to soothe his fever. Once, long ago, she had watched over young Linley when he was dying—and over Sir William himself during his attacks of liver trouble. The Admiral's tired stomach, his over-

excited nerves would soon be cured. Thanks to the silence with which Emma managed to surround him . . . and to the ass' milk she prescribed for him.

The existence these two led, at the gates of Naples, in an orchard, was that of two lovers passionately fond of each other. The luxurious and sordid city spread itself out along the flank of the Bay a few miles away across the water, like an exuberant oasis, with its walls the color of coral and honey, its blue byways, its leprosy and its splendor. Small boats from the British fleet kept up an incessant coming and going between the villa landing and the ships of the Admiral. Mrs. Cadogan supervised the Italian servants, the Swiss cook and the English sailors who brought dispatches or conveyed orders. The one-eyed man never left his couch in the open air where Emma's firmness kept him, in the deep shade of the orange trees. This adoring lover who had only one eye and, moreover, only one arm, belonged to her, body and soul in his glory and his misery. She gave him little material and servile attentions with a joy like unto the splendor of the sun over the wretched buildings of the outskirts of Naples. Her lips, her caresses, the intoxicating fragrance of her thick hair, the velvety soft skin of her cheek, her eyes which changed with the nuances of sea and sky, her soothing hands . . . Emma lavished them all

upon the invalid hero. She heaped them upon him with prodigality. But she had not yet become, if one may say it, his mistress. . . .

Nelson's stepson—a child by a former marriage of her who, in an English shire, was now Lady Nelson—Captain Nisbet, was not deceived about the danger which beset the conjugal happiness of his mother. At an officers' mess dinner, he had already allowed himself several vexatious allusions to Lady Hamilton concerning the ascendency which she had won over the Admiral. He had been punished for it by being removed, and his step-father did not wish to see him again. The Ambassadress wrote to Lady Nelson about her husband's state of health, because it was only too evident that the wife was uneasy. In the letters that Nelson wrote to this woman of insignificant and petty character, married long before, more through discouragement than through love, to assure himself a little future . . . this lion! . . . Nelson mingled his gratitude for the Hamiltons and his pretended love for his wife in phrases which he tried to make tender. But his wife was not deceived. Especially after her son's warning: "I shall come to you at Naples and nurse you myself," she wrote.

"Why do you linger thus at Naples?" asked his old friends. "Come back home, come back!"

Nelson went away . . . for a month . . . to

besiege Malta. But he returned immediately to Lady Hamilton; for it was she, she alone, who kept him in this kingdom, of which he harshly said in a letter to Lord St. Vincent, that it was "a country of fiddlers, poets and rascals!"

The white plumes of Lady Hamilton, who was mounted on a bay horse and galloped in front of the regiments on parade, rose above those of Maria Caroline, dressed in a sort of general's uniform, who sat very erect on her prancing steed, her bearing helped out by tight corsetting but her flanks swollen from her eighteen confinements. . . .

The Kingdom of Naples was in arms. The struggle against the French electrified this indolent country where Nelson had been provoked by hearing too many songs of love rise in the shade of the orange trees that never ceased to flower.

The Queen's favorite liked to review the troops, to ride at top speed among the soldiers who camped at San Germano, near the city. She breathed the zest of adventure with the evening breeze, when the smoke of the fires rose around the camp. The Ambassadress, in the midst of the officers who paraded beside her, made one think of the heroines of Casanova, the artist who painted the cavaliers and

warriors, which one saw on the Queen's tapestry-covered furniture. And while she rode her bay horse she felt between her shoulders the little wound pressed there by the crosses that her hero, who had embraced her just a little while ago with his single arm, wore upon his bosom.

In the midst of ten thousand men, by the side of the Queen, how could one fail to believe oneself invincible, fail to taste all the intoxications of power? Maria Caroline wanted to have her war . . . as other Queens or Empresses, carried away by the clank of arms and the resonant tread of soldiers' heels on the flagstones of their peristyles, have wished it and have longed for it . . . to their misfortune.

Living at the Embassy, Nelson went each day to Lady Hamilton, who made no more resistance to his advances than Championnet, the French general occupying Rome, made to the attacks of the Neapolitan army, which had entered the Eternal City behind the Austrian general, Mack, and Ferdinand.

Falling in love, at the age of fifty-five, with a woman of twenty, then marrying her, Sir William found himself, at seventy, a member of the fraternity of deceived husbands. He took his place there at an age when many others have for a long time ceased to be. For him, it was but a title. He showed the same tenderness for

his darling Emma, and for the brave Nelson the same admiration . . . the same blindness. His household became the most ostentatious *ménage à trois of* Europe . . . and the most united . . . of the United Kingdom.

Championnet drove the Neapolitans from Rome on November 29; following him, the French soon advanced towards Naples. Emma, directed by Nelson, advised the Court to take its gold and treasures and the Royal Family itself to a safe place at Palermo. But Maria Caroline wanted to give battle. Ferdinand and Mack, with the remnants of their army, were at Capua. In a few days, Big Nose would be home. He was, of all the men she had to endure, the one whose presence weighed most heavily on Lady Hamilton. Since the departure of Ferdinand she had ruled at the side of Maria Caroline, with Nelson at her feet. But the vindictive passion and incoherent decisions of the Queen irritated the impetuous Nelson, who wrote to Lord St. Vincent: "The pitiable conduct of the Court has not helped to improve my temper."

Between the exacting affection of Maria Caroline, which had become selfish, and the violent passion of Nelson, Emma had to carry out perpetual compromises. She was marked by Destiny to play the leading part in the events

which were about to be enacted around the Mediterranean. The *Cisalpine Republic* had been formed; "Let the Neapolitans get out of the mess themselves!" replied the Emperor of Austria to Maria Caroline, who asked his help in an attempt to reform her army, which had lost everything, guns and ammunition, in the three weeks the campaign had lasted.

The Queen insisted that Emma, whom she called her only friend, should never leave her. Some nights Emma stayed at the bedside of Maria Caroline, whom she had to soothe, who could not sleep, and made at every moment decisions which she countermanded on the morrow. . . . Worn out, Emma went to sleep at last on a lounge, at dawn, after the hysterical Queen had dozed away in her arms. The following morning the Queen wrote to her daughter, the Empress: "Our infamous army, corrupted, bribed, can only run away. We can find no sailors; everything is slack and corrupted. The nobles wear long faces, hide their money and neither offer nor do anything. The soldiers flee and are pitiful cowards!"

The King's return complicated matters, for he planned to defend Naples now against the French, who were advancing . . . undisciplined and valorous . . . these terrible Revolutionaries of Valmy and of Jemmapes . . . who had guillotined their King and Queen.

They could no longer eat a meal in peace, except Ferdinand . . . and Sir William, who dined with his *glorious friend* at the Embassy, and thought of putting his collections in a secure place.

Emma feared for the Queen. She plied her with attentions and gathered for her the last flowers in the deserted gardens. She was obsessed with the idea of saving her. It was she who made the inventories. Little pieces of furniture . . . French, and antiques were accumulated in several rooms with the aid of devoted servants. One of the oldest of these, to whom Emma talked while they were hastening to empty the Palace, spoke to her of a subterranean passage leading to the sea . . . The Ambassadress, who never undertook anything without pushing it to a conclusion, chose several trusted men to accompany her and went down to explore the places described. In the darkness, by the light of tapers and torches, the acrid air smelled like a sepulchre. A few twistings amongst the thick walls bewildered the little band, led by Emma, who had knotted a scarf around her head, and who showed in the light of the candles and the burning pine-knots, a countenance in which tragedy now triumphed over sensuousness. The anxious group stopped before a grill, closed by rusty chains. Beyond, more secret passages went

down into the depths. Lady Hamilton sent back to seek reinforcements from amongst the guards. Let them bring tools! The band separated; Emma stood alone in the midst of the breathless servants and the smoking resin torches. She felt again the first sensations of childish fear. She saw herself dying there, suffocated in the darkness; she, the all-powerful, the friend of the Queen, the idol of a master of the world, the wife of an ambassador, the model of painters, the delight of all eyes . . . Lady Hamilton! This man who had given her the information, guided her . . . was he reliable? She felt her weakness! Perhaps she thought she must face death without quailing; a good and noble action would blot out many an evil one. Footsteps were heard in the distance, the echo of voices. New lights licked furtively through the darkness. Here were rescuers! But Emma had just touched for a moment the bottom of the abyss and breathed for an instant the breath of the tomb.

The grill being opened, the subterranean passage sloped and its roof inclined, making them right who said it came out upon the sea. At the risk of stumbling over the rocks, Emma dashed forward. Suddenly a brilliant opening like a blindingly bright piece of money . . . daylight! The steps of the runners slowed before the light. She who led the band turned

her head towards them. She bade them be silent. . . What was that sound? . . . In the moist and languid December afternoon, like a floating shred snatched from Summer, this noise, this undertone, was the sea!

The Ambassadress retraced her steps. She flew. She arrived in the Queen's apartment . . . trembling, her face still surrounded by the knotted scarf, as Romney had painted her at the time of her début at the age of nineteen:

"Victory!" cried she . . . The Queen believed that a new English fleet had brought her an army. . . . "I have discovered a subterranean passage. We shall be able to take everything away!" gasped Emma, kissing her.

The Royal family, the ministers, now felt one only urge in their panic . . . to get away. Later, all would avow that they would have remained if they had not acted with the express desire of saving their fellows. The gold and treasures were transported to the ships of Nelson, but they forgot the sheets and the beds. The King had only one servant. The young Princes were trembling, frightened, bewildered. Emma watched over all, concerned herself with each one, prepared a couch for the Queen, whose strength was exhausted.

From the shore came cries and strident

whistlings. The radiant December day, granted by God as a token of Hope, was replaced by the winter night, disturbing, threatening. The fleet, which set out towards Sicily, was obliged to shorten sail, to tack about in the Bay. Maria Caroline, who had abandoned herself to Nelson, and dreaded the fury of the French, would have nothing to do with Acton, who saw in that an ill omen. When day broke, the ships were still in sight of Naples. In spite of the winds and the heavy sea, a small boat bearing a delegation from the nobility, the magistracy, and the people, came to address a last supplication to the King, to abjure him not to abandon the city. In the flagship, tossed about by the waves, this embassy of elderly respectable men, partly or totally embarrassed before a King who was scarcely more clever than themselves, argued with him. It was a scene both tragic and comic. In the storm, the condition of one of the youngest children of the Queen, Prince Albert, who was not yet eight, and who had come aboard sick with fever against the advice of physicians, became worse.

The clanking of chains mingled with the squeaking of the blocks. The steel-like regard of Nelson surveyed the soft elegance of Acton, this exquisite grown grey in the service of the idle hours of an ardent Queen. Hamilton, who never ceased to be an Englishman, in vain

attempted prodigies of diplomacy. Cast upon this floating plank at which the waves licked hungrily, the princes, whom their parents had kept in ignorance of danger, showed faces filled with alarm. Everything conspired to place Emma in an atmosphere, the grandeur of which, perhaps, she did not quite grasp, but the crushing weight of which she was in her fashion, of stuff strong enough to support. She settled herself near the Queen, lying upon a mattress in the embroidered sheets of the Embassy. The livid head of Prince Albert rolled upon the knees of the Divine Lady, whom he would not leave. He felt the approach of death, this child . . . one of the eighteen the Queen had borne . . . this child with whom one had scarcely bothered since his birth, and especially since last summer, at the end of which he had begun to wane. He felt a solacing sense of well-being in Emma's hands. He was in the agony of death. No one noticed. Only she. From the pale face of this child of an overly sensitive mother, looked out the clear, lustreless eyes of the Hapsburgs. His was much like another look, of one of that same family . . . a look that would die, even as this, from the face of a young man, pale and coughing, thirty-two years later. This was the son of the hated Bonaparte and great-grandson of Maria Caroline herself, who would bear the title, too

heavy for his too blond head, of King of Rome! . . . The eyes of the agonized Hapsburg were fixed, under their grey lids, upon the sapphires, the hard sapphires, of Emma's eyes. Emma, the daughter of the peasants of Hawarden. Of what did she think, as she pressed to her heart this body which burned before it became cold? Perhaps of her own daughter . . . the little Emma, whom she had not seen for so long a time?

"Do not leave me! Do not leave me!" cried the last-born of the Queen's children, when the soothing hand was taken for an instant away from him, with whom Death had come to dwell. "Do not leave me, Milady!" His mother's tone . . . the same voice! Emma, who was going to lay little Prince Albert on the couch, for she believed him asleep, pressed him anew against her.

Human jetsam filled the ship, which fought its way ahead, surmounted wave after wave and rode over the heaving sea, as a dray advances painfully through the sands of the seashore.

Like a spirit, her hand feeling for obstacles, her arms outstretched like those of Samson, or clinging to the netting, Emma went to seek the one-armed man in his tiny cabin. Not for a sensuous caress. But for some of those long savage looks which emancipated beings, whose

souls have conquered and become attached, exchange in moments of despair.

Day returned, the winter night, closely following, succeeded it. And Naples was still in sight. Emma did not again leave little Albert, this wisp of a child who burned, this ghost of a Hapsburg with his death-white hands. . . . still more tenacious than his mother's . . . which clung to her arms. His breath, more halting, more labored, ceased in a little choking sound. And on her dishevelled couch, his mother still talked of vengeance, of terrible reprisals. She continued to be ambitious and warlike, to be Queen in her own manner . . . while her child died in the arms of her whose lips were her most beautiful adornment, and while above on the bridge, lean, yellow, bedizened with lace in spite of the voyage, restless, daring, scenting dangers and tempests with tigerish nostrils, the man with one eye and one arm, the Baron of the Nile, Nelson, navigated his vessel laden with kings and treasures . . . with his beloved . . . and the child who had died a moment ago . . . towards the coast of safety, the solid earth . . . Palermo!

VI

ONE person alone . . . Lady Hamilton . . . shed still the light of life and hope on the overwhelmed rulers, their family, their ministers and new retainers, on this Court which began to form again, slowly, imperceptibly, like the tissue and flesh around an amputated limb.

Here was an atmosphere piquant yet sweet, in which were mingled the warmth of devotion and the chill of death. The year was begun in despondency, before the shimmering waters of the Bay of Palermo, between those two guardians which darkened each in turn, Mounts Pellegrino and Catalfano. Emma bestowed beyond reckoning, the tenderness of a woman, of a sweetheart, of a mother; a tide of self-denial rose up in her, like moisture to the lips, like blood to a wound. Nelson wondered at her. He grew poetical over her courage, in the letters which he sent off. It was a new "attitude," which did not have for a setting the mirrors in gilded frames and candle-light, but which mingled with the course of great human events and was enacted in nature.

The news from Naples was confused, contradictory, according to its sources. Championnet and his soldiers had entered the city. But he was one of those French dogs who had, like Emma, the desire to charm. He would charm the Neapolitans for a time. One learned at Palermo . . . amid exclamations of rage from the Queen . . . that the aristocracy itself had offered him a gala at the San Carlo! The San Carlo . . . memories of Emma, of her début . . . the demonstration at her appearance . . . glimpses of the Queen, her pretty gestures . . . the gala in honor of Nelson. . . .

Days passed, during which, deprived of their capital and of a part of their kingdom, the rulers, under the pretence of seeking the happiness of their subjects, thought only of means to reconquer them, means which hinged upon Nelson, who must therefore be retained. The existence of Lady Hamilton was unsettled, harassed, glorious and humble . . . an existence which contrasted, in a palace up to this time uninhabited, penury with splendor, privation with the extravagance of the ambitious; amongst conspirators, deserters and turncoats, near this Queen who felt the hysteria of power, and who was menaced by a fall; in her mutilated kingdom, half destroyed by foreign invasion and internecine strife. These conspir-

ators, these sham diplomats, these red-heeled bandits, these soldiers of fortune, at whom one had to smile, who were launched into the mêlée by being persuaded of the impossible . . . Emma could bear them no longer. A need of pleasure, a keen desire to break through the circle in which she was confined, burned within her. Enough of politics and of war, enough of royalty, of the ambitious. A scarf! A scarf! . . . Candles lighted at her voice, in a circle of admirers . . . at the Palace of Sessa, beneath the deep blue of the night! . . . to have no other care than to be beautiful!

And yet, Nelson adored her, the Queen loved only her, Sir William idolized her. Beyond counting were the flatteries, the open enthusiasms, the candid or cynical avowals of the men who passed through this Sicilian palace in the time of roses, in the great circle of blue mountains, before dark Pellegrino . . . these men who marched to death, and would perhaps not have gone so joyously, had they not believed that they had sipped sweet promise from the enchanted chalice of her eyes!

When the Directory recalled Championnet, light shone upon the exiled Court. Emissaries arrived from the Abruzzi, from Caserta and from the Apulias. Gaetano Mammone, Fra Diavolo, Michele Pezza, still other brigand chiefs, urging Calabria to revolt, entered into relations, un-

certain but steady, with the government of Palermo. Maria Caroline, who saw the awful Revolution hold sway at Naples, begged Nelson, through the mediation of Emma, to plead for reinforcements from England. She had demanded aid from Russia and from the Turks, on the strength of long-standing treaties. The Turks had taken possession of Corfu. The English were installed in the islands which commanded Naples. But Admiral Caracciolo, a favorite of Ferdinand IV, who had come to rejoin the Royal Family at Palermo and who had shortly obtained permission to return to Naples in order that his property might not be affected by the laws aimed at the exiles. . . . Admiral Caracciolo went over to the Republicans. Always, revolutions draw in their wake some of these defections, concerning which it seems easy to write an epilogue at leisure.

Cardinal Fabrizzio Ruffo, scarcely of a priestly turn of mind, more warrior than prelate, embarked for Calabria. He took with him in the Royalist bands all the armed men he could find. Against the Republicans the fight was waged without quarter. The Revolutionaries were supported by the French, commanded by Macdonald. The 7th of May, at last, he re-crossed the frontier. The Cardinal occupied Naples, in its chaotic confusion, in the midst of piled-up corpses and pools of blood.

Savagery was loosed in those scenes of riot which break out in cities for a long time deprived of leaders.

Emma visioned the dawn of a return to Naples, and felt the birth of a hope that she would have again the only pleasures which satisfied her, on the day it was learned that Cardinal Ruffo had just signed a compromise with the rebels.

Nelson had scented his prey in the tempest. His ships were off Naples at the hour when the conspirators, to whom the treaty signed by Ruffo had promised safe-conduct, set out for Toulon. The coming of the Victor of Aboukir threw confusion into this band which had in fancy breathed the longed-for air of France. In a few hours the ships which scudded towards liberty were prisoners of him who had defeated Bonaparte. A copy of the treaty, countersigned by the Cardinal, was brought to Nelson, who sent it off to Palermo immediately. The Baron of the Nile had been too much with Maria Caroline in the course of a year, to have any doubt of her fury when she learned that liberty had been granted to these Revolutionaries, these accursed Republicans, and he declared that the King alone should decide their fate.

Palermo was the loneliest place in the world to Emma since Nelson had gone away. The copy of the treaty signed by Ruffo arrived;

the rage of Maria Caroline, when she saw escape the victims on whom she had dreamed of wreaking her vengeance, surpassed in extravagance the scenes which the Ambassadress had only too often witnessed. The Queen scribbled upon each article of the treaty furious commentaries, implacable. The crime of *lèse majesté* must be punished. Nelson must be made relentless in his vengeance.

Who would take the Queen's reply to the Admiral? Who could exert a sufficiently powerful influence on him to oblige him in no way to compromise? . . . Lady Hamilton!

The Queen drew Emma to her, whispered instructions in her ear, repressing with her dainty, blue-veined hand the irregular beating of her heart.

Before the eyes of Emma gleamed long scarfs of Mediterranean blue fringed with waves from the bows of a swift sailer. She agreed to go. . . . after a little coaxing.

Ferreted out by the police, betrayed by a servant, Admiral Caracciolo had just been taken prisoner. From Nelson's ship, Emma saw the horizon of the Bay of Naples, which Vesuvius crowned in the enshrouding night with a ruddy plume of smoke. Before the forts reduced to silence, beside her hero, in the

heart of the English fleet, Lady Hamilton thought with winged fancy, of Cleopatra.

Caracciolo must be judged forthwith. An example must be made of him. Act promptly, sow the seeds of terror . . . Caracciolo was spirited, generous. He had made one mistake, after having a long time honorably served the Queen. The Neapolitan leader was the first victim the English Admiral seemed to desire. In view of the brotherhood of arms and their equality of rank, Emma suggested to her lover a course of clear-sightedness and clemency. But she had just come, bearer of orders, from Maria Caroline, and still burned with the torrents of fire breathed into her ears. However, she was going to try to dispose the heroic one-armed man to mercy.

The Baron of the Nile could influence the Council of War which would judge Caracciolo aboard the British ship. But even the Neapolitan's counsel betrayed him. And in the gloom, at the threshold of his narrow cell, one can almost discern the compassionate look of Emma, who read despair and rage upon Caracciolo's strong face. She compared involuntarily, with her artist's eyes, the thin and maimed Nelson with this bronzed hero, this great noble intoxicated with new ideas, to whom his conqueror, son of an Anglican clergyman, refused even the grace which he asked, of

being shot . . . like a soldier. He would be hanged from the *Minerva's* yards . . . that Neapolitan *Minerva* against which he had dared to level his cannon.

From Palermo the Queen sent messenger after messenger: "Recommend my Lord Nelson," she wrote to Emma, "to treat Naples as if it were an Irish city which had acted thus." Lady Hamilton tried to justify in some way her being at Naples, which had enabled her to escape from the cage, wretched and troubled, which was Palermo. Without the vindictive Queen behind her, Lady Hamilton would be merciful. Caracciolo was of noble family. He was the sort of man that pleased her adventurous heart. But he would be hanged: Nelson hated him . . . perhaps because of a look he had surprised in the eyes of Emma.

And it was the month of June, the loveliest month of the Neapolitan summer, with the longest days . . . which were born and lingered, only to die in the blue that stretched from Castellammare to Procida. Cleopatra was in the tallest ship, by the side of her intrepid hero, who had surrendered an eye and an arm to the enemy . . . who would yield them his life on a not-distant day, who would give it like a handful of powder in his vessel at Trafalgar in the cataclysm of one last tremendous victory.

Caracciolo would be hanged from the yards of the Sicilian *Minerva,* which he had formerly commanded; and there would swing, all limp, until the set of sun . . . this radiant sun! It was the hour when, descending an inclined gangway that stretched from the flagship onto a pennoned barge . . . . it was the hour that Nelson chose to take Emma, who could not go ashore and tread the soil of Naples, warm with blood . . . . it was the hour that Nelson chose to offer to go with her and breathe from the sea the soothing fragrance of the foliage of Pausilipo. The bestarred hero was tightly laced, his profile clean-cut; he had only one arm, only one eye, and he loved with an insane love this divine creature before meeting whom he had never known what love was.

Nelson had decided upon his course before leaving the ship, for the rowers were directed towards the *Minerva.* . . . The executed man hung by the neck from a yard-arm, his hands tied behind his back, his head bent forward, his chin sunk deep into his breast; he wore only the fine white blouse of the aristocrat and grey breeches . . . and his beautiful, rebellious black hair veiled his great black eyes, wide-open. . . .

Emma clutched the single hand of the impassive man who loved her. A shudder of horror shook her. Then, as if he had received

a sudden order, the seaman who held the tiller brought the boat quickly about. Whilst the insentient rowers continued to lift in cadence the gleaming wooden oars, Emma bowed her head and buried herself in her scarfs. Then to break the silence, which had grown heavy between her and this harsh lover to whom she was so devoted, shutting her eyes, she forced herself to say with dry lips, in a lifeless voice. . . . "A lovely evening".

Supported by Nelson, Ruffo sent to death without mercy such culprits as fell into the hands of his ill-organized and famished troops; Republicans, Royalists who had gone over to the Revolution, young men, even women, (the Marquesa di San Felice, whose execution was delayed until she was delivered of child). The Lazzaroni wanted their King. Maria Caroline was unpopular, hated, but the presence of Ferdinand was essential, longed for. Nelson and Emma went to bring him. They announced to the representatives of the people that they would bring him back.

Nelson was welcomed at Palermo with demonstrations of the liveliest joy, in which reception Lady Hamilton had her share.

Contrary to his usual custom, Ferdinand opposed the expressed desire of his wife to accompany him to Naples, not without a cer-

tain firmness, of which one would never have suspected him. The Queen choked with rage. She wished to revenge herself, to be present at the executions which would take place. But a drama had been quietly enacted, perhaps even without a word having been exchanged, in the Royal Household. The lampoons of the Revolutionaries had apprized Ferdinand of the fact that his wife had been for a long time the mistress of her Prime Minister. He made no allusion to that, for he dreaded her fits of hysteria, but he constrained her to stay at Palermo, unsubdued . . . and he embarked alone for Naples, accompanied by the Hamiltons, in the *Foudroyant*.

They arrived in the Bay, July 10th. When the Neapolitans saw the Bourbon standard with its fleur de lys floating from the ship of the English Admiral, their delight was boundless. Ferdinand threw himself into the arms of Lady Hamilton, calling her "his wonderful mistress." With the King, the Admiral, and her husband by her side, invested with the powers and the confidence of the Queen, this woman who reigned upon the *Foudroyant*, before the powder magazine, quenched but still smouldering, which was Naples, beneath the sun of August, after and during new hecatombs, this woman resembled only remotely the adorable and beloved model of Romney,

the Bacchante of Thomas Lawrence, the mistress of the Lord of Up Park and of Charles Greville.

Each day she had to dispatch long letters to the recluse of Palermo, who only saw the light of hope when she turned towards Emma. She complained, she despaired, when Emma went three days without writing. The rest of her time Emma was occupied with Nelson, making up his game of whist, cutting his meat, mashing the vegetables in his plate, breaking his bread. . . .

Hamilton, who had by no means lost all his delicacy, maintained a more than diplomatic reserve. He smiled and effaced himself . . . like a pastel behind its glass which protects it from the hand of man, but not against the heat of the sun. He was past seventy, the last few years had tired him. He was one of those men who like to hunt, but who do not truly live except in salons. Enamored of Nelson, Emma seemed almost to have forgotten his existence. She was deferent to him in public. But a stranger, not informed in advance, seeing her between the two men, would have pointed out Horatio as her husband . . . in the midst of this crew which treated her as a queen . . . amidst sharp commands and orders sung out through speaking trumpets, the sounding of bugles and the roll of drums.

The Neapolitans thought to find again their easy-going Prince. They hoped for clemency. But from the ship in which Ferdinand lived came only harshness, new executions, a régime of vengeance and extermination. Pillage was encouraged, the city soon became once more the theatre of most hideous deeds.

The Queen of the Mediterranean sometimes tried to soften the harshness of Ferdinand, of the pitiless Ruffo, of Nelson himself. But, isolated in the *Foudroyant*, in the centre of the Bay, the King and the Admiral were of one mind in their desire for extermination. Emma, who represented Maria Caroline, received delegations. She organized movements. The Queen sent her six hundred ducats to distribute to the needy. Maria Caroline felt the obligation of winning to her the heart of these people whom she burned to exterminate, in order to punish them for having dreamed of a republic.

In this rôle of envoy, of representative of the Queen, Emma, at Nelson's side during radiant July in the enchanted Bay, came to believe that she was the real queen.

The 1st of August, for the anniversary of Aboukir . . . how many things had happened in that year! . . . they illuminated the ruins and again adorned the city with flags, before a King who dared not leave the ship which sheltered him. Nelson insisted that Ferdinand

install himself at Naples, at the Royal Palace, under the protection of Ruffo and the Lazzaroni. Big Nose was never very brave. He was one of those men, sensual, weak and pusillanimous, old before their time, in whom mature age wears the mask of senility. He did not wish to live in his Palace except under the guard of allied troops. And then he had only pretended to be free of the Queen's influence; the power which she exercised over him had lasted too long for him to do without it. He decided to return to Palermo and wait until the troops of Ruffo should finish their work.

Once more Emma bade adieu to the scenes of the most beautiful years of her life, to the coasts of Pompeii, of Sorrento and Castellammare, to Vesuvius which smoked nonchalantly beneath the sun, to the Palace of Sessa in which she perceived, with the one-eyed man's telescope, the breach made by cannon shot. She was going to bring him who had triumphed back to Palermo, and would return in a few months to these happy shores, wild and gentle, carefree as of old. In the ship, from bow to stern, shouts answered commands. The sails were spread; the ensigns fluttered up and dipped. The reports of cannon carried their farewell to the most distant of the smiling shores. . . . And yet it was the last time that Emma would look upon the city

which had served well her adventurous desires, her ambitions and her attitudes. At the moment when she thought to have reached the height of power, of grandeur and of renown, Emma Lyon, the beloved audacious one of old, she of the ingenuous glances, the sensual lips, the slim shoulders . . . Emma was going to climb down the rungs she had scaled. She would tread again, on the return journey, the beautiful road which would become so rough . . . harder to travel than it once had been for the limbs of a fifteen year old, which bore the svelte body of a Corybante, and one of the most divine faces which man has ever looked upon.

VII

THE breeze which glided down from Monreale this August night was scented with full-blown roses, even with those that had begun to pass. The façade of the palace reflected the illumination of the gardens. Sicilian society had come this evening to Palermo to celebrate the return of the King, of the Hero, of the Ambassador, of the Goddess. Footsteps crunched on the gravel in the alleys which were softly lighted by lanterns of damask paper, hung from the branches. In the flower beds with their arabesque of boxwood one saw astragals with little chalices in which candles burned with unwavering flame. Emma was clad in white once more, her arms and her throat bare. The Queen had just offered her a lot of magnificent robes to compensate her for the loss of those which she had had to abandon at the Palace of Sessa. She wore, under her rivers of diamonds, another of Maria Caroline's presents, a gold chain to the end of which was fastened a miniature of the Queen and whose frame was of letters intertwined, made of diamonds, which formed

these words: *Eterna gratitudine*. By the light of the candles Maria Caroline's eyes were streaked with red, their lids heavy; her lid corners drooped with weariness. A few moments before, Ferdinand had signified to her his intention not to return to Naples for a long time to come. Through the open windows one heard the murmur of the crowd, happy when fires are lighted for it, when the air is pleasant, the night serene . . . and when the glances of young men as they wander through the shadows, light upon groups of women dimly seen and scented with perfume.

The Queen was, in a manner, excluded from the fête this evening; although she had to appear there, surrounded by her younger children. She wore a necklace from which hung pear-shaped diamonds whose fire sparkled against her flesh so pale that one would almost confound it with the pale satin of her robe. Meanwhile, in his study, the King conferred with Nelson, now appointed commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean fleet, and on whom Ferdinand had bestowed as a reward for his services the title of Duke of Brontë. Maria Caroline could not contain her rage at having to stay at Palermo, where she was consumed with inactivity. Her anger vented itself in muttered words, in long sighs, in biting her nails, in the little salon with its precious furni-

ture where the portraits of Queen Marie Antoinette and of Louis XVI were hung, as if to recall her misfortunes.

But Emma was attracted by the night. The moon shone upon the groups of people scattered through the park. She saw, beyond a heavy grove, the plumes of two lofty palm-trees, stiff and lonely, and, in the light from metal reflectors, a group formed of three wax images, imitating statuary, which consisted of Nelson, led by Hamilton towards a Fame to whom had been given the features of Emma. Her image was there in the open, for all to view, in an ardent apotheosis. The sounds which entered through the open windows carried to her the echo of the praise which she had so loved, the applause, the cheers. Just now when she was going to appear in the midst of a family of rulers, the wife of an Ambassador, on the arm of a hero, she would taste again the theatrical intoxication which she had always sought.

Maria Caroline, who realized that she was no longer heeded, wiped her eyes with a handkerchief too lacy, too small, in which cambric had no place, as if Queens never needed to weep. Then were announced to the two women in their splendid attire, King Ferdinand and Admiral Nelson, Duke of Brontë, who came to take them, followed by the

Court and the English officers, to assist at the triumph which had been prepared for them. Maria Caroline embraced her dear lady once more. Then she stiffened, ceasing to be a woman, to take up again, under her splendid adornments, the rôle of that being who is condemned to show nothing of humanity, symbol of an eternal yet perishable power . . . a Queen! In the depths of a mirror above the chimney piece the exiled Queen had just seen, in the gloom of the salon by the dancing glow of the tapers, as if suspended in its golden frame, the severed head of her sister, Marie Antoinette.

Autumn followed summer, the Sicilian autumn which is like a ripened spring-time.

Nelson sailed the Mediterranean, after attacking Malta, and held only one desire . . . as soon as he possibly could, to press with his single arm that lovely form which had begun to grow a trifle stout. Emma felt the same longing for the Admiral. In London, the powers began to find that Hamilton was decidedly too old. On their part, the enemies of Nelson considered his absence as a breach of discipline. Lord Keith complained of the contempt with which he treated the communications of the Admiralty. Numerous refugees had exaggerated in Paris, as in London, the part the

Hamiltons had taken in the avenging furies of Ruffo, of Maria Caroline and of Ferdinand. They represented Emma as a kind of procuress of the bloody executions of Naples. Those who accused her were only too readily given credence. At the beginning of 1800, the Honorable Arthur Paget, Hamilton's successor, was appointed. But this was not known at Palermo. In March, however, Paget began his journey, by way of Vienna. Maria Caroline was the first one informed, by Circello, the Ambassador of Naples in London. Her sorrow was extreme. She waited several days before imparting the awful news to Emma and tried to prepare her for the blow which was about to fall upon her.

As for Nelson, he had not sojourned in the Mediterranean for three months save at his own good pleasure. The day Hamilton received the letters of recall Maria Caroline's mind was made up; likewise the Admiral's. The Queen, the Hamiltons and Nelson would quit Palermo: the Queen to go to Vienna, there to await amongst her own people the coming of better times; Nelson to take in England a rest which he considered he very well deserved. In reality, Emma drew after her these hearts which idolized her. Maria Caroline thought she could never sufficiently show her gratitude to Emma, who had served her so well for eight

years, who had so seldom left her, and whom she herself so violently loved.

The Queen embarked with three of her daughters, also the Princes Luitpoldel and Castelcicala. Mrs. Cadogan and a secretary of Emma's, Miss Cornelia Knight, were in the party. They set sail at length for Livourne. Ferdinand, in company with Acton, witnessed the departure of the wife who had reigned so long in his stead and the associates who were precious to her. He shed no tears.

At Livourne, Maria Caroline would bid adieu to those she loved, whom she called her only protectors. Nelson, much moved, repeatedly kissed the hand of the impetuous Hapsburg. Hamilton was more aloof. He dreamed of fishing, his feet in the damp grass, in his Welsh country at last, under the willows moving in a light wind. Emma felt real anguish at separating from this woman, pitiless and versatile, generous and sweet, who held her head so proudly and whose lips never uttered anything but maledictions or words of rapture.

Scarcely were they in sight of Livourne, July 9th, after having passed Corsica and the Isle of Elba, when a flotilla approached to welcome, with transports of joy, the Queen who had voluntarily exiled herself, and the conqueror of Bonaparte. On shore the troops

presented arms, the priests sent up clouds of incense and the women brought flowers. But during this month of July, 1800, Bonaparte invaded Lombardy anew, at the head of his army. The 10th was Marengo! The people of Livourne, in panic, wished to obtain from Nelson the promise that he would take command of an army to go and conquer, a second time, this man whom he had for a long time confined to the sands of Egypt. Nelson did not at all dream of measuring his strength with such an adversary amidst the harvest.

In the evening, whilst the Queen and her friends were assembled after supper at the Governor's, the populace invaded the plaza and the streets around the palace. Maria Caroline had to appear at the window with the Princesses. The Duke of Brontë was called in his turn. They called for a speech, which he refused. The Queen's nerves were strained, every noise upset her. Lady Hamilton slipped an arm about her. The Queen recognized the familiar hand and pressed it with her elbow, impressing the shape of Emma's rings upon her flesh. As the shouts of the crowd redoubled, the Ambassadress pushed aside Maria Caroline's daughter, the young Maria Amelia, who was leaning on the balcony. She raised her arm. Her scarf blew up and enfolded her like a flag. The crowd grew silent. A bat passed. A gust of

wind puffed up on her forehead the tresses of the Bacchante. The reflections of the lights played upon her. There was no moon in the sky. The bow of her mouth was clearly drawn over her teeth, and the arch of her brows was long over the sad brilliance of her eyes. Then, taking the place of the Queen and of the Victor of the Nile, with one of those sudden impulses, courageous and dramatic, which were characteristic of her, with an elbow resting on the rail of the balcony, and in Italian in which the elegance of chosen words mingled with the expressions she had learned at Naples, Emma harangued the Livournese; she reassured them, and enjoined them to enforce quietness about the unhappy Queen. She promised them the support of Nelson, on condition that they would instantly go away from the Palace and return in peace to their homes. Before the lovely leader, leaning over them and vehement, the crowd obeyed and retired. When quiet reigned again in the city the Queen and her followers went back aboard the ship. Nelson abandoned the Livournese to the dread of Bonaparte. Anchors were weighed, sails set, and the ship was under way. Before the morning twilight the vessel was far from the coast. But this was only a manœuvre to frustrate the enthusiasm and the hopes of the Livournese. Emma had just persuaded her lover and her husband to make

the journey in company with Maria Caroline as far as Schoenbrunn. Before reappearing in England, it would not at all displease her to receive the approval of the court of Vienna.

The following night, the ship returned to the shore and the travelers disembarked. They were going to the Adriatic, passing by way of Florence and Urbino. A ship belonging to the Emperor of Russia, which would conduct them to Trieste, waited for them at Ancona. The spectre of Bonaparte pushed the fugitives forward. This atmosphere of terror, the troubles, the vicissitudes of the voyage, did not bother Emma at all.

On every occasion, at every stop, demonstrations welcomed and accompanied the Baron of the Nile. The entry into Vienna was triumphal. Fêtes in honor of the Admiral multiplied. Lord Nelson maintained the same simplicity, a little disdainful; his manner of "a shaggy spaniel," and cared only for Emma in the midst of the festivities and the excitement of banquets. He wanted her at his side. She cut the food on his plate and *he carried her handkerchief*.

The Court of Vienna was the most particular on points of etiquette in all Europe. Lady Hamilton, who was no longer twenty but thirty-seven, who arrived preceded by a singular renown, whose personality was strange,

adventurous, her situation abnormal, discussed, unaccepted, and whose beauty had begun to undergo the first encroachments of the evolution of all terrestrial life towards annihilation . . . Lady Hamilton was awaited and observed with unfriendly eye. If Nelson had not always kept her near him, if she had not just brought Maria Caroline to her family after an eventful voyage and two years of strife, perhaps she would have learned again those graces which reserve lends to a too glorious perfection.

VIII

A DOUBT, the obsession of which Emma had fought down in secret, was cleared away in Vienna, where they stayed at the Embassy with the Earl and Countess of Minto. She could no longer be mistaken about her condition, which she had scarcely considered from the outset, because of the exciting events of the departure from Palermo and the voyage. She confessed it to her lover, whose heart overflowed with gratitude at the thought that he was to have a child by her whom he adored.

During a concert which Prince Esterhazy gave in the Admiral's honor, after a repast served by one hundred grenadiers, during which Haydn himself directed the oratorio of the Creation, Lady Hamilton played Nelson's hand at cards. At meals, she was concerned only with making him eat . . . while he reiterated in a low voice, to the point of wearying her, his enchantment, his joy at soon becoming a father. He had eyes for her alone. One can imagine the discredit which such behavior would cause amongst the ladies and gentlemen of the Court. But, transported into

a new world, in a foreign setting, certain distinctions escaped Emma, whom everybody called the Cleopatra of this one-eyed Antony.

After several days of brilliant receptions and unique festivals Lady Hamilton took leave of her who had been, since her marriage, the companion of her every moment, . . . the Queen of Naples.

At Schoenbrunn, where Maria Caroline had gone to live amongst the Archdukes, as she had during her childhood, the scene of adieu was heartrending. Beautified by her tears, in her grey gown, its blue girdle matching wonderfully well the changing sapphire of her eyes, Emma regained all the prestige she had lost during the fêtes at Court. They embraced long, as if to encompass in one last kiss all those they had exchanged for seven years. The Admiral expressed his determination to come and locate at Brontë. All promised to return to Naples whenever the Queen should reënter into her domain, which had never seemed so dear to her as it now did. Each outbid the other in the hope of living anew the beautiful summers, the soft nights now flown away—even the septuagenarian. Emma kissed the thin fingers, the veined hand . . . as on that first morning when she had presented herself at the Royal Palace, bearer of the letter of Marie Antoinette. The vision of that scene flashed through

her bowed head, while from her neck hung by a chain of gold the royal miniature, heavy with diamonds, with its *Eterna gratitudine!*

Along the banks of the Elbe, which they soon descended in boats adorned with flags, the population turned out to greet them. And always the names of Antony and Cleopatra sped from lip to lip. Echoes of the whispers came to the voyagers with the blasts of autumn and the first cold breath of the North, that Emma no longer knew. At Hamburg, the warship Nelson had commanded having not yet put in an appearance, the Admiral, ever impatient, embarked in the first boat he could find ready to weigh anchor . . . the *King George*; fit for a sailor; frightful for a pregnant woman, delicate and fashionable. At sailing-time, Mrs. Cadogan went to work peeling potatoes for supper! They would be shortly, in two days, by the 2nd of November, at Yarmouth; their native land, where lived a people they had forgotten. The most disturbing of the spectres which would spring up to accuse, was not the young Emma, but the betrayed wife . . . Lady Nelson.

For two years, the correspondence between husband and wife had not been tender. What welcome would Lady Nelson have for him whose name she bore without possessing his

heart? Emma, who knew the Admiral's sentiments, did not at all doubt that she would remain mistress of his senses. She was the first woman he had loved, this sailor; for the widow Nisbet he had not loved at all when he married her, in a moment of dubiousness over his future. However, he would be forced to let her share in the honors that would be paid him at the public celebrations which awaited him. Emma dreaded this bondage; she perhaps would suffer as much, if not more, from the thought of the obligation as from the necessity of sharing his bed with another; she who felt his child grow heavy in her womb.

In sight of Yarmouth, salvos were fired, to resound in Emma's heart. They spread pride there but also caused anguish lest glory, honors . . . and his family . . . should deprive her of her hero. She, herself, who had just come down the steps of a throne, she who had reigned over the blue Mediterranean . . . what would become of her, the wife of a diplomat in retirement? What place did the world have for her? Would their resources permit the Hamiltons to keep up the pace which she would not be able to diminish without humiliation after the high life of Naples, the open house she had kept, the dinners for sixty guests, the balls, the concerts and the equipages with the coat-of-arms of the Court? The mere

sight of the English coast reawakened, in the face of her rebellious pride, the memory of her early experiences.

When the ship docked, in the midst of cheering, banners which the cold wind tossed, uniforms, official personages, the assembled crowd, Emma crossed the decorated gang-plank behind the Admiral. She prepared a phrase for Lady Nelson, seeking to find her. She had not come. She had flouted them. It was, in any case, a threat of the morrow. But her absence would allow them to enjoy more at leisure, as far as London, the acclamation and the honors. Pine-branches, garlands of laurel and holly, beautiful tapestries hung from the windows, children perched high up on the roof-tops, and the many speeches, presaged for Emma an existence such as she desired, and seemed to bring about under another sky the joys, a bit crude and obvious, which she loved, in the character of the actress which upon the stage she had never been, but which she had never ceased to be so brilliantly in life.

The entrance into London, the 9th of November, was all that she could have wished. The miniature of Maria Caroline was outlined against the velvet of her robe. *Eterna gratitudine.* She was in Nelson's carriage with her husband. She could believe that the city's ovations were addressed as much to her person

as to that of the hero. How many acclamations in that year of 1800; how many scenes of all sorts, of apotheoses, of journeys over the Mediterranean, where it seemed, before Naples, that the body of Caracciolo must continue to swing from the yards of the *Minerva*, at the close of a day radiant and soothing. . . . Palermo, the night festival, the wax divinity to which the sculptor had given her features . . . Livourne, the speech from the balcony in the drabness of the evening, before a thousand lifted faces which drank in her words . . . Vienna . . . and now, in the cold and foggy air of London, more applause, the delirium of the crowd, eyes into which her own eyes looked and found admiration. Emma had scarcely set foot upon the earth, when she summoned a procession of dressmakers and milliners. She held in with girdles the child which would be born. New robes were necessary for this traveller who brought back with her diamond necklaces given by Maria Caroline and the elaborate jewelry presented long ago by Sir William; but whose wardrobe was in a wretched condition after having traversed Europe.

The next day, at the banquet given to Nelson, London saw her again in all her splendor, whilst a sword of honor was presented to the Baron of the Nile. Festivities filled the first days; Lady Nelson did not appear. Friends of

the maimed warrior were astonished at her absence and commented upon it. In the midst of trying on a tunic, Emma scribbled a rough draft of a letter which the Admiral must write and send promptly to his wife to make her come out of seclusion.

This audacious trick succeeded: the austere and betrayed wife at length announced her coming. Emma arranged that the interview should be held in her little salon in Grosvenor Square, where the Hamiltons were staying with their friend, Mr. Beckford. Emma did not appear to greet the visitor. The Admiral went downstairs to find in the salon the wife who awaited him. He continued to wear his dress-uniform. He loved decorations; his breast was covered with them. Lady Nelson had not seen him since he had lost his eye. She was strongly moved, but controlled herself and remained rigid, frozen with terror before this adulterous husband, his deformities and his innumerable crosses. She still could hear his acclaim in the noise which came up from the street. She thought of her secluded life and realized that this statuesque and splendid man was no longer hers. It was Captain Nelson who had married her; the Duke of Brontë, Baron of the Nile, would not even turn his head to gaze at her with his one eye. And, besides, between them had glided this woman, superb and scan-

dalous, like the carven figure-head of a ship . . . Lady Hamilton . . . in whose salon they were, smothered in sheafs of flowers.

Emma had come to listen at the door left ajar. With one hand she clung to the gilt knob. With the other she supported her womb in which stirred the hero's child . . . the offspring which his legitimate spouse had failed to give him. The Admiral seemed to live only in his expectations of its coming. . . . To break up the uncomfortable interview, Emma had decided to appear. The visitor was rather small; with legs too short for the rest of her. The Bacchante of Romney had beautiful long limbs, which appeared longer still in the flowing robe that she wore indoors. Lady Nelson grew pale. The goddess forced the woman dressed in black to sit down beside her, assured her of her devotion, of her esteem for the Admiral, of her desire to see him happy with the companion he had chosen. Whilst speaking she perceived the cold and single eye fixed upon her, which emitted a ray like an iceberg in the slanting sun of the poles. She pulled back over her form the folds of light cloth. She spoke persuasively to the recluse of the sweetness of life. She quenched burning coals under liquid words. She took the hands of this widow of a living man; she soothed them between her own. She coaxed. She cooed

like a dove. The forsaken woman thought that she saw in Emma a little island of blue sky in the fog. Her uneasy eyes questioned her husband, who stood unmoved between his fecund mistress and his barren wife. Emma's only purpose, however, was to obtain some public demonstration calculated to give a sop to opinion, to try to turn away a part of the scandal which she knew clung about her white robe and the girdles which matched her eyes. With the skill of her gestures, as an artist of the sentimental, she took possession of the Admiral's single hand and placed upon it those of his wife . . . the little yellow hands which she smoothed softly. It was at last agreed that Nelson and his wife, Lady Hamilton and her husband, should meet at the theatre, all four, on the morrow and sit in a stall which Emma had already reserved. To finish the beguiling of her victim, whom she had dazed with her gentleness, Emma spoke of Maria Caroline, of her "dear, adored queen" from whom she read a letter which had just been brought to her. The Nelsons went away. The Admiral accompanied his wife to her home, then came back to rejoin his mistress.

The next day, the Hamiltons, arriving first, took their seats in the stall. In the lights set in the purple of the draperies, Emma, who had sowed her white robes with diamonds, could still pass for *the most beautiful woman*

in London. That was soon the opinion of the audience. For a long time Lady Hamilton had not attached so much importance to the presence of her husband, always elegant, self-effaced, smiling, pastel-like. She leaned towards him, she smiled at what he said, with her lips alone. The spectators had no eyes save for the late Ambassador at Naples and for the Ambassadress. They were expecting that one of the empty places would shortly be occupied by the Victor of Aboukir. Sometimes, the lovely eyes, which appeared sombre in the lights of the theatre, sent over the crowd, like light-houses, their steady rays. The first part of the play went unheeded by the audience, which had eyes only for the stall. During the intermission the door opened. A woman appeared dressed in grey and black, followed by a man whose breast was covered with stars, who had only one arm and only one eye. Lady Nelson, frightened by the applause, took her place. The cheers burst forth. The Admiral kissed the finger tips of the hand which was stretched out to him. The cheering grew louder. Everyone in the theatre stood up. The Baron of the Nile, drawn up as far as his short height would permit, stiffened; he bowed several times in rapid succession. Emma arose, as in Naples, as in every place where acclaim had associated her with the glory of the hero.

The impetuous crowd, which had just acclaimed Courage, applauded Beauty. On her little fauteuil, Lady Nelson had swooned. She had to be carried out. Tumult . . . hasty streaming of spectators into the corridors: the stall, towards which all eyes had been turned, was empty. Emma was lavish with her attentions. The eyes of the fainting woman reopened at length . . . horror-stricken, beneath the beautiful face that bent above her.

For a few weeks the Nelson household tried to resume again its family life, but the Admiral spent the greater part of his time in Grosvenor Square. Emma's condition was his sole preoccupation. Nobody, however, up to now, had suspected anything. Emma appeared at fêtes. She went out each evening; except those on which her husband was invited . . . without her . . . to St. James's, to visit the King and Queen.

Nelson remonstrated with the elderly husband. How could he consent to go alone to St. James's when the sovereigns were so obstinate in their refusal to receive Lady Hamilton at Court! But Sir William was a diplomat, he was an aristocrat, and he bowed to the rules of etiquette even when to such a point they were humiliating him. And then, he had just bought a town house in Piccadilly. Emma had in-

stalled herself there with her habitual prodigality, and the Ambassador saw his resources dwindling. He had not the character nor the youth to bear the embarrassment which scarcity of money would cause. He wished to obtain a pension, a grant for the services which he had rendered England during the third of a century. And the King, his friend, had not yet made up his mind to this act of generosity.

To pay for the mansion in Piccadilly, Emma sold the set of diamonds that Sir William had presented to her before her marriage. Hamilton himself would dispose of a part of his collections at public sale. In spite of so many worries, the household accepted the invitation of Mr. Beckford to go and spend the Christmas Holidays at Fonthill Abbey. A representation of attitudes would be given there. Emma practised them in the midst of the thousand cares of getting settled in her new home in which she furnished on the second floor an apartment where in the greatest secrecy she would give birth to her child. She was busy also with the forthcoming sale of the collections, in the whirlwind of success and worldly vexations, financial embarrassment . . . and this pregnancy of seven months, which she had to keep hidden from everybody.

For the séance at Fonthill, Emma, who could

not and dared not remain standing too long, provided herself with properties . . . a gilded urn, crowns of laurel leaves, goblets; this time, the attitudes prepared would be almost all enacted sitting. They met with the greatest success. She had to repeat that of Agrippina offering the ashes of Germanicus in a gilded urn . . . still others: Clytemnestra . . . and the Bacchante, whose smile still retained, under the vine-leaves, all its youthfulness. No idea of her condition occurred to any of the spectators. The women found Lady Hamilton rather stout, but the proportions of her body had remained perfect to such a point that the goddess was not at all impaired. After the attitudes, Emma sang a duet with the Banti as she had once at Naples, after her marriage. Renewed success; enthusiasm for the lovely and robust adventuress, who conquered everybody once again and lied to them, played with them, deceived them with this child which she felt living in her . . . whilst they acclaimed the vividness of her attitudes and the moving quality of her voice.

In the mansion in Piccadilly, No. 23, Emma led for a few more days the brilliant life she loved; but the dark hours were approaching. She pretended an attack of fever. She had happened to be affected by it at Naples after months of too great heat, of too ardent sum-

mers. She had to have quiet in a darkened place: the room which she had furnished on the second floor. She refused to receive anybody, from the middle of January. Nelson had had to go again to sea at Plymouth, his heart sad at his inability to be with Emma for the birth of his child. Sir William was not admitted to visit the patient except for a few moments morning and evening, . . . evening especially, when fell the early night of January and when only a single lamp, away from the bed, lighted the room. But with the approach of February the intensity of the fever redoubled. Lady Hamilton excused herself from receiving her husband. All noise exhausted her, all conversation was insupportable. She could only tolerate Mrs. Cadogan, who never left her bedside.

One night, between the 30th and the 31st of January, Emma buried her face in the pillows, conquered her pain and gave to the world a daughter. She nursed it for more than a week and stopped its cries as she had repressed her own groans, with rare will power. Sir William received permission to come up at length to see his wife. The child was carefully concealed in a dark closet where clothes deadened the sound of its bawling. The husband knew nothing. But it was necessary that the baby be taken away from Piccadilly. A

fortnight after its birth, Emma arose during the night. She was draped in shawls, Mrs. Cadogan helped her to don a cape of ample size. They would go out, after waiting for the complete silence which followed the retirement of the servants. She whom her mother called Horatia, was wrapped in swaddling cloths, her face covered; almost gagged so that her cries would not reveal her presence when they went down the stairs. But at the slightest creaking of a step the two women, whom the beatings of their hearts almost deafened, exchanged one of those long understanding looks, which bound together more closely the quiet, silent mother and this daughter who had made of her life so great a sensation.

When Emma appeared, bearing the child in her arms, at the house of Mrs. Gibson, a wet nurse whom Mrs. Cadogan had discovered in a suburb, the people were asleep. The mysterious lady was veiled. She gave no explanation, she refused to sit down. Her gestures were rapid and noble. Her eyes bright with fever. She did not seem at all to notice the untidiness of the house, the half-clad inmates, the embarrassment which her unexpected coming had caused. She did not conceal her haste to get away. She paid a sum of money, left a quick kiss on the child's forehead and gave it one last look, after having promised

to return soon. Mrs. Cadogan waited in the cab. Once there, Emma almost swooned away. The next morning, when Sir William asked if he might visit her, he found her smiling, rested, assuring him that the fever had at last abated and that she was going to get up.

IX

COMPELLED to stay at Plymouth, Nelson was jealous of his mistress. The fear that she would let herself be wooed by some other haunted him; he forebade her to receive the Prince of Wales, who had expressed a desire to hear her sing. Emma resisted this order, dwelling on the importance of the personage. But she finished by submitting, and called off the promised soirée. She was thanked for it with transports of joy. She led again, in the mansion in Piccadilly, a gorgeous existence, as far as appearance went, without regard to Hamilton's income. In the month of March the sale of the objects of art took place. Nelson paid three hundred pounds for the picture of Emma by Madame Vigée-Lebrun. The auction brought one hundred and twenty-five thousand francs. Too little for Lady Hamilton. The life of Naples continued . . . without the prestige of Maria Caroline, who had already forgotten her dear lady. The one-armed man kept up an almost daily correspondence with Emma; he hid their identity in these letters under the names of Mr. and

Mrs. Thompson, in order that he might speak more freely of Horatia. He treated Emma as his wife. Doubtless he thought of Sir William's seventy-three years and visioned the possibility of a divorce. A sudden change had taken place in the Nelson family, which was a help; the mistress was hailed and honored; whilst Lady Nelson, whom they had accused of having foolishly shown herself to be a shrew, and unworthy of the most celebrated living man in Great Britain, was endowed with the sobriquet of "Tom Titt." The Admiral, in secret left Plymouth, where he commanded the fleet, to come and spend two hours in London with the mother and child. When the life of a sailor gave him leisure he went to the nurse's and stayed there for an entire afternoon, playing with Horatia, whom he acknowledged his daughter. In the month of July, taking advantage of his leave, he went to live in the environs of London, at Staines, on the Thames, with his beloved household. Sir William went fishing and told stories which were almost always the same now! Emma gradually let herself grow stout; life is sometimes easy for three, and the climate of Sussex had brought back to her all the freshness of her complexion.

Nelson was compelled to interrupt his sojourn in the country. In France, the prepara-

tions of the camp at Boulogne were going on . . . the invasion of England dreamed of by Bonaparte. The alarm passed, the national disquiet removed, the Duke of Brontë reappeared. The several days at Staines had left him memories so pleasant that he proposed to Emma that they buy a country-house. He wished to realize the cherished dream of all men in love: a house in the country wherein to shelter the beloved woman and, if absolutely necessary, her husband. He gave Emma every license to furnish this nest, on the condition that she should spend on it only three hundred pounds sterling. She set to work. The two lovers had a secret scheme already, that they would one day put into execution: to give to reality the adventurous character of a romantic novel, to render plausible the truth which was implausible, and present to the Ambassador the little Horatia as a child they had found, in whose fate it would be inhuman not to take an interest. In the Piccadilly mansion, which was filled with too large a staff of servants, such an *adoption* would be difficult. In the country it could be accomplished without hardship.

For two months, Emma, great spendthrift, busied herself with furnishing Merton, on the road to Wimbledon, not far from Epsom in the green expanses of the English downs. She

decorated the rooms with all her pictures and those of the Admiral; then she busied herself with the hennery and bought little ducks and pigs. She even added fish to the river in order that Sir William could fish there. And to flatter Nelson, the little stream was, of course, christened the Nile. There for eighteen months the Hamiltons and the Admiral frittered away days without clouds, . . . this fantastic and adventurous creature, whom success had intoxicated, felt the need of seeing her house filled with friends and casual guests; she was generous, altruistic, and never wearied of loving not only pleasure, but her own illusion of pleasure.

Less than any other, the English people cannot tolerate that anyone should defy its opinion. Sometimes it endures those who scandalize it; but becomes pitiless whenever the occasion for revenge is offered. The history of Society abounds with examples of this, where the pit waits upon the apotheosis. We who have loved Lady Hamilton in her youth, her carnal splendor, and all her perishable graces, in the time of Romney and of Thomas Lawrence . . . we do not wish, we cannot bear to follow her without emotion during the twelve years of her decline. The heart fails one.

She had first to suffer, in April, 1803, the death of Sir William. His will made his nephew Greville sole heir. The spirit of family and of caste was there revealed. The fortune went with the name. In his last wishes, Nelson would show the superiority of the plebeian heart over that of the noble, the lover's over the husband's. . . A fortnight after the opening of Sir William's will, Sir Charles Greville, who was obligated to an allowance of a hundred pounds sterling to Lady Hamilton . . . a mere trifle! . . . drove his former mistress from the mansion in Piccadilly. He sent to her a packet of her old love letters, but he soon refused to pay her the hundred pounds sterling, which he appropriated for her creditors.

Nelson remained to her; his fortune was modest, but he adored Emma. She believed herself fortunate. The Admiral was detained in the Mediterranean, but he did not cease to write her and to consider the possibility of marriage that the death of Sir William had rendered less unfeasible. Lady Nelson seemed an obstacle no longer. At the same time, the one-armed man made representations to Maria Caroline . . . who remained unresponsive . . . to obtain from her an intervention with King George for the pension which Sir William

had solicited in vain. Lady Hamilton lived with her lover's brother, the Reverend William Nelson; then with other relatives, alternating her stays with those of Mrs. Cadogan and Horatia. Finally, after two years of absence, the Admiral returned to live at Merton, the 19th of August, 1805.

But it was written that no power in the world could longer save Emma. Twelve days after his arrival, Nelson received grave tidings: the Admiralty begged him to take his command once more, in the face of the peril which the sudden appearance of Admiral Villeneuve, in command of the French and Spanish navies, had brought to the British fleets.

Nelson hesitated to obey . . . he who had always suffered from discipline. He was no longer thrilled by the thought of victory. Did he not have the right to enjoy the rest for which he had so dearly paid? But Emma insisted that he go. She stood firm before the assembled family and told him his duty. He must go to sea again, just once more. The one-eyed man pressed her to his heart and, tapping her on the shoulder, called her "his brave Emma."

The 21st of October, 1805, was Trafalgar! Nelson was stricken unto death in the *Victory*, by a shot fired from the *Redoutable*; a glorious death, the memory of which would

be immortalized in history and in the greatest square in London.

The last lines written by the hero, a little while before the battle, entrusted to the nation for which he was about to give his life, Lady Hamilton and Horatia . . . vain testament, which, because of its regard for respectability, England would not accept.

EPILOGUE

THE heroine of so great a love, victim each day of a too splendid past, sank down little by little. The friends of her prosperity abandoned her. Her creditors harassed this improvident hind, this queen of attitudes, this lover of pleasure, who had been the model of painters, the friend of a Queen, and an Ambassadress so useful and brilliant. They compelled her to sell Merton. They tracked her, ill, coarsened, even to the King's Bench, even to the debtor's prison, in which she was twice incarcerated . . . even to the attics, where she raised Horatia, compelled to sell as a last resort, the silver goblet that Nelson had given to his child; then the blood-stained uniform of the hero, which he wore at Trafalgar and which she had jealously guarded, as a lioness, deprived by hunters of her lion, might keep a shred of his skin between her paws. And she sank, faithful to her memories, down to the last extremities of misery, even to exile in France, even to the garrets of Calais, where she died at the age of only fifty-three, still a splendid colossus of energy in the face of adversity,

perishing of hunger, and teaching to Horatia Italian, French, German, and music, and persevering in the superhuman resolve not to confess to the child that she was her mother. Adversity falls upon certain beings for whom one would expect only joy. But their beauty, which embellished the world, is prolonged beyond their decline.

Emma remained always young in certain memories, despite her premature old age. Her pictures by Lawrence and Romney, which had been engraved, helped the illusion. One day, a short time before her death, at the beginning of January, 1815, after having taken Horatia to school, she entered a church, where she was merely one of the old women in patched garments whom one saw kneeling on the *priedieux*; then she went back to her lodging in la rue Française. There was a knock at the door.

A man, still young, stood on the threshold. He held a bouquet of flowers in his hand, he spoke to Emma and asked for Lady Hamilton. He recognized her at the instant he questioned her, in the blue glance of pleasure she felt at seeing a stranger bearing flowers enter this room where only creditors came. Her nose had kept its fineness, its straight line, in the plumpness of her cheek and chin. The puffiness of her eyelids, the little wrinkles, the greying

hair had metamorphosed her for whom the man had asked and before whom he stood surprised. He gave his name. It told her nothing. He was secretary to the Duke of Marlborough. He had seen Lady Hamilton only once, at the time when she had just come to live at Merton and made, in 1802, a trip in company with Lord Nelson, Sir William and Charles Greville. At these names the discouraged face lighted and reawakened, thrice.

Emma remembered, not the features of this stranger who kept his flowers in his hand; but the trip! Then were assembled at her side for several days the three lovers who had made the deepest impression upon her life . . . who had made her what she was. They had just visited in Wales the estates of Sir William, of which Greville was steward. Then, they returned to Oxford, which fêted them. The castle of Blenheim, belonging to the Duke of Marlborough, being only at a short distance, nothing more was needed to attract the Queen of Adventure.

She remembered! The ravaged face lighted in the last glimmerings of the day.

At her instigation, the Admiral had asked the favor of visiting the castle. The victor of Aboukir wished to see the banners carried away by the victor of Malplaquet. The Duke replied that he would be honored to welcome

him. Lady Hamilton presented herself at Blenheim next day, with her husband and her two lovers . . . him of the past, Greville; and the actual lover, the Duke of Brontë, Lord Nelson, Baron of the Nile. The castle was the greatest and the richest in treasures in England. Emma was clad in white. She wore a little blue hat which fitted her head tightly, and her hair was cut close. The blue of that hat brought back the memory of others which had been blue likewise . . . Lady Hamilton prepared to gain another admirer, to charm a new stranger of note. The eyes of Oxford dons had told her the previous evening that she had not ceased to be beautiful. . . .

The carriages drove into the immense courtyard, servants in splendid livery hurried to meet the visitors; all the gates were opened. Emma's white scarf floated in the hall before the white standards captured from the French. The Duke had not yet appeared. The smile began to become fixed on her beautiful lips, where mockery hardened into bitter disillusion . . . her eyes grew cold, her bearing lost its proud beauty . . . soon the visitors were sitting before a luncheon splendidly served. A secretary of the Duke came to make his excuses, confusedly. Emma had prepared to fascinate. . .The Duke of Marlborough did not appear. . . .

Before this woman, prematurely aged, the visitor stammered:

"I am the Duke's secretary, Milady . . . I have never forgotten that offense, since your visit . . . Your beauty . . . I came to France . . . I have dared . . . I have profited! . . ." Tears blurred his eyes, his voice trembled . . . he let the flowers fall at the feet of this woman so hardly recognizable, and disappeared, without closing the door behind him, into the dusk and the wind from the sea. . . .

By the Mediterranean,
July-October, 1926.

FINIS

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